

THE RECORD CONNOISSEUR'S MAGAZINE

# THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER

*Edited by* PETER HUGH REED



OCTOBER

1938

*Articles by—* GEORGE LESLIE - PHILIP MILLER - GEORGE BREWSTER

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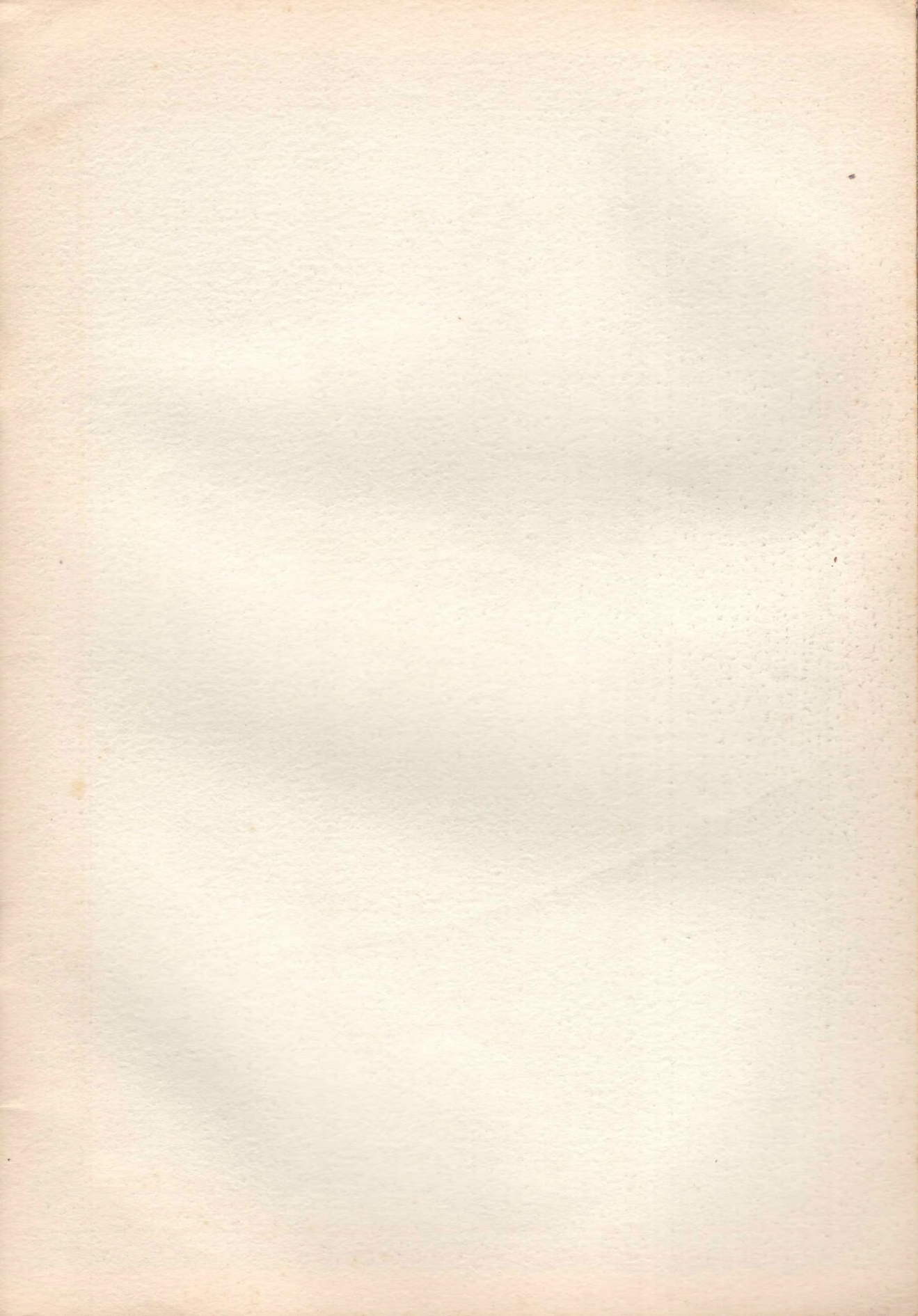
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*Georgi Chaliapin*  
*1924*





# THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER

Volume IV, No. 6

OCTOBER, 1938



<i>Page</i>		<i>By</i>
190	A Visit to Glyndebourne .....	George C. Leslie
194	Overtones	
195	Chaliapin's Recording Career .....	Philip Miller
201	The Musical "Comics" .....	George A. Brewster
204	Prize Winning Lieder Lists	
207	Editorial	
210	Record Notes and Reviews	
226	Record Collectors' Corner .....	Julian Morton Moses
227	Swing Music Notes .....	Enzo Archetti
229	In the Popular Vein .....	Horace Van Norman

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Inserts: Prominent Musical Personalities — Past and Present

No. 11 — FEODOR CHALIAPIN

(These pictures are for framing at the wish of the reader. They should be cut apart with a knife.)



# A VISIT TO GLYNDEBOURNE

GEORGE C. LESLIE

VICTORIA STATION, 3:45 P. M.: "FORWARD carriages for the Glyndebourne Festival!" We're off from London's Victoria in the middle of the afternoon—madly dashing when the average Britisher should be quietly contemplating his "spot of tea". We're on the very platforms from which so many adventures of the memorable past have had their beginnings. The humdrum and the commonplace mingling with the great expectancy of our adventure.

Adventure it is, for our goal is the little opera house, on a beautiful English country estate, some sixty miles from the shadow of Trafalgar, where we are to have some new operatic experiences.

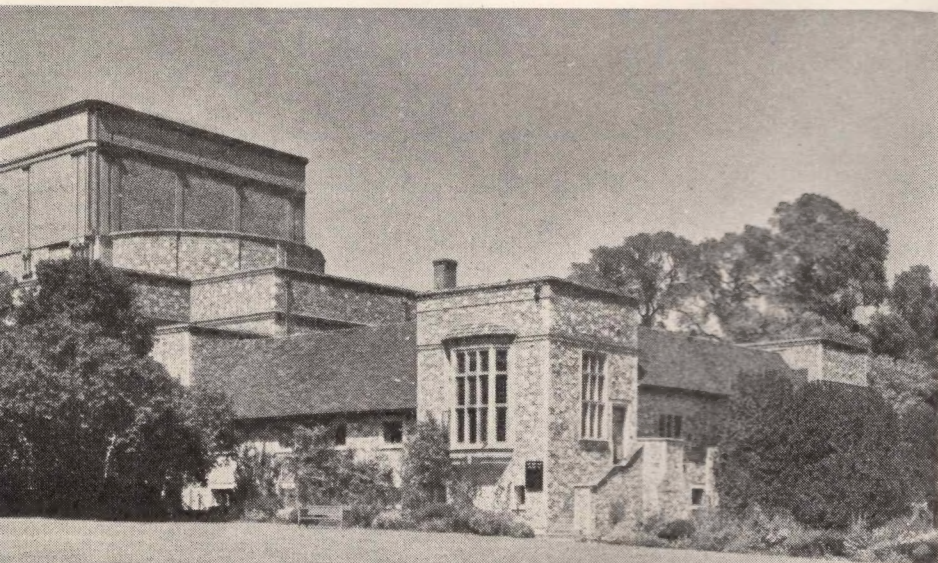
We get our first taste of what is to come when alighting from the train in Lewes, a quaint old English town, situated in Sussex, which has some of the most beautiful country scenery in southern England. The town with its picturesque houses and narrow

streets which lead us on to our goal, Glyndebourne, is typical of the old tradition but soon we will break with the past and watch new traditions being made.

A few words about the scene of our adventures for the next five Tuesday evenings.

The festival is held on the estate of Mr. John Christie, an Englishman with a love for Mozart, and his wife, Miss Audrey Mildmay, a soprano of distinction, who shares his enthusiasm.

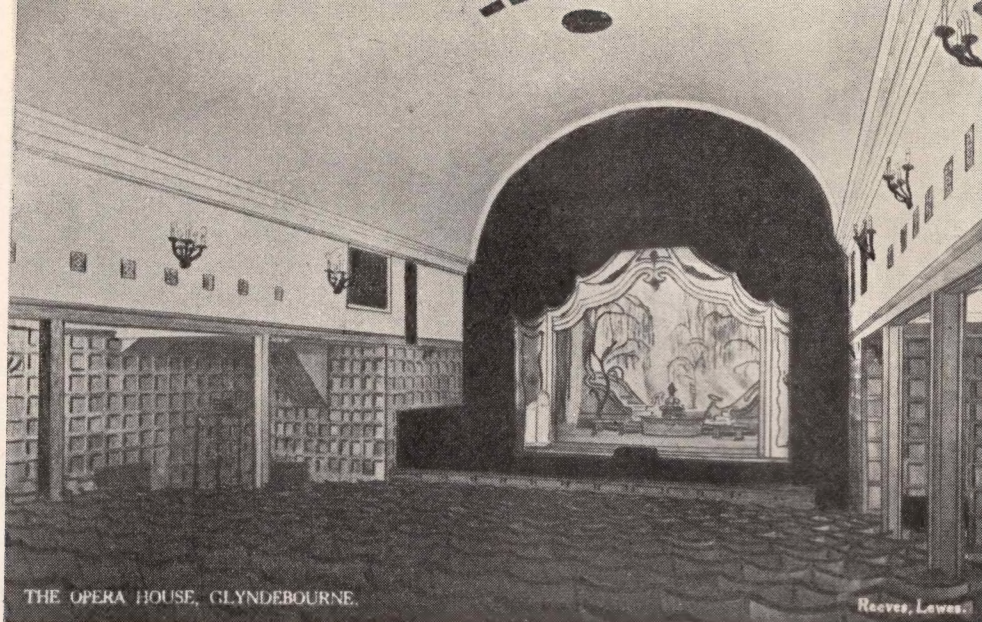
Five years ago, when the first festival was inaugurated, only Mozart's operas were performed. This year it was decided to enlarge the repertoire and Donizetti's gay and tuneful comedy *Don Pasquale*, and Verdi's grim and tragic *Macbeth* were added. This policy, judging from the response of the public and the press, was a judicious move. It marked the first successful English production of *Don Pasquale* and the first production in England of *Macbeth*.



Exterior of  
the Opera House—  
Entrance to Artist's  
Green Room



Interior of the  
Opera House—  
Garden Scene  
from "Cosi fan  
tutte"



THE OPERA HOUSE, GLYNDEBOURNE.

Reeves, Lawes

The opera house is a small and intimate building, seating about six hundred persons. The interior is very plain and is finished in Elizabethan style. All the seats have an unobstructed view of the stage and in contrast to festival chairs in other houses are very comfortable.

Encircling the opera house are beautiful English gardens, which in the late afternoon and early evening, when you are enjoying the intervals between acts by strolling, lend an air of enchantment and take you back to the time of the "first performances".

Dinner is served during one of the longer intervals as is the custom at festival performances in most parts of Europe. The dining halls are spacious and one has been built around an aged tree so that none of the natural beauty would be spoiled. A profusion of flowers and the best food in England all contribute their share to a memorable evening.

Glyndebourne has what is to our mind the first ingredient in true opera presentation—a perfect ensemble. This is very apparent from the recordings which were made for the Mozart Society, but this perfection is even more in evidence at the actual performance. A very high standard of excellence prevails and its uniformity is the most outstanding feature. There are no stars; only artists who are fully qualified for the roles they are to sing are engaged. Last winter over four hundred aspirants for one of the new productions were auditioned. Practically all of the costumes are made by the wardrobe department and for *Macbeth* three hundred costumes had to be executed. The scenic department comes in for its share too; as new productions require new sets. A remark we overheard sums all this up: "You

are on duty twenty-four hours a day, every day, when working at Glyndebourne."

The casts are chosen from the four corners of the world. Their nationality being listed after their names lends an added interest to the program. A few are of international fame, most are known throughout Europe, and a few are young British singers of unusual promise.

The Mozart performances which we have heard have been recorded and were of especial interest. The thought kept cropping up in our mind: will they be as good as or better than the records? Fortunately our expectations were exceeded. From the first bar of the overture of *The Marriage of Figaro* to the final curtain at the close of the series there was no let-down. In fact in some instances the passing of time had mellowed and improved the art of the interpreters.

#### *The Marriage of Figaro* — May 24th.

The cast was ideally suited to the frame in which the work was performed. The individual members all worked for such a fine ensemble that it was difficult to single out any one as being better than the rest.

#### *The Cast*

Count Almaviva.....	John Brownlee (Australian)
The Countess.....	Aulikki Rautawaara (Finnish)
Susanna .....	Audrey Mildmay (English)
Figaro .....	Mariano Stabile (Italian)
Cherubino .....	Marita Farell (Czechoslovakian)
Bartolo .....	Salvatore Baccaloni (Italian)
Marcellina .....	Constance Willis (English)
Basilio .....	Hedde Nash (English)
Antonio .....	Fergus Dunlop (Scottish)
Barbarina .....	Irene Eisinger (Austrian)
Don Curzio .....	Eric Starling (English)

The Count, Figaro and Cherubino were new. All three sang and enacted their roles with understanding and finish. Farell looked



like a young boy and sang as beautifully as she looked. Brownlee is an artist and it was very apparent in his treatment of the role. Stabile's voice is now suited to smaller auditoriums and his work with Susanna was most delightful. Rautawaara sang and acted the Countess with distinction. Last year I heard her at Salzburg, where she replaced Lotte Lehmann, and the improvement in her technique was amazing. Only two of the artists remain to be discussed. Baccaloni is a buffo of the first water, with a voice and style that are so perfect in their field that his work is ever a delight. Last but not least comes Mildmay as Susanna; her voice has taken on considerably more color and a greater assurance than formerly.

#### *Macbeth* — May 31st

This opera was chosen to open this year's festival on the 27th, when it had its first performance in England. Excitement ran very high and much was expected of the production. The preliminary news was not very heartening. The original Lady Macbeth developed a cold and was temporarily replaced by a native artist, who, while she sang the part beautifully, just did not look or act like the Lady Macbeth of our imagination. Finally Vera Schwarz was secured to sing the role and after some justifiable nervousness at the first performance acquitted herself with honors. This opera as far as most people were concerned was "new", so we had no one to tell us just how so and so did it or what should be done.

Here the designer Caspar Neher conceived a setting which belonged to no particular period but nevertheless strongly suggested the time of the opera. Questions were raised by some as to the witches, but I don't know of any one having encountered one in the flesh so we'll let that stand. The costumes were attacked but we did not have a Lady Macbeth resplendent in silks and satins and droppin' pearls as some of the complainers were used to with their old-school Italian opera. This we consider a great advance.

#### *The Cast*

Macbeth .....	Francesco Valentino (American)
Banco .....	David Franklin (English)
Lady Macbeth.....	Vera Schwarz (Yugoslavian)
Attendant	
to L. M. ....	Elizabeth Abercrombie (British)
Macduff .....	David Lloyd (Welsh)
Malcolm .....	Eric Starling (English)

The ensemble was again the wonder of the day, but Valentino and Schwarz were superlative. Both had voices above the average, and an intelligence which immediately

stamped them as outstanding. The tone color Schwarz used in the *Brindisi* contrasted so sharply with the terror-stricken tones of Macbeth that instead of a tawdry drinking song a whole drama was contained in that scene. The *Sleepwalking Scene* was dramatically and vocally as perfect a piece of artistry as it has been possible to hear in many a day. Lady Macbeth's fall at the conclusion, down a flight of steps, is a melodramatic fitting climax to an artistic characterization. The chorus must be mentioned, for their work was of a standard not usually found in opera houses, festival or otherwise.

#### *Don Giovanni* — June 7th

##### *The Cast*

Don Giovanni.....	John Brownlee (Australian)
Commendatore .....	David Franklin (English)
Donna Anna.....	Ina Souez (British)
Don Ottavio.....	Dino Borgioli (Italian)
Donna Elvira.....	Luise Helletsgrüber (Austrian)
Leporello .....	Salvatore Baccaloni (Italian)
Masetto .....	Roy Henderson (Scottish)
Zerlina .....	Audrey Mildmay (English)

The ensemble was marred by the fact that Helletsgrüber, who had been ill, had not quite recovered for this performance. The rest of the cast were more than capable and Brownlee's Don, which he disclosed to us at the Metropolitan last winter under unusual conditions\* and which came off so well, was again a delight. A gentleman trifling in love, but nevertheless a gentleman. He does not clown the part as Pinza does. Baccaloni, who I hope will be able to disclose his Leporello to New York in the not too distant future, did not rely upon by-play; the inflection of the voice made his portrayal a cherishable item. His comedy was not broadened to farce. Mildmay, as Zerlina, was perfectly cast; she sang and acted in her usual exquisite manner. The rest of the cast was also of a high standard. Henderson's Masetto was the best it has been my privilege to hear.

#### *Così Fan Tutte* — June 14th

Why the recording of this opera has not been made available to American admirers of Mozart is one of life's mysteries.

The production at Glyndebourne sparkled and bubbled like a glass of champagne, and a most delightful time was enjoyed by all.

The cast we heard was the same as the one that made the recording. It has a general excellence considered as a whole, with the Despina and the Don Alfonso as its most outstanding members. The portrayal of these characters by Eisinger and Brownlee is the

\*Both Brownlee, as the Don, and Rose Bampton, as Donna Anna, are said to have gone on in New York without an orchestra rehearsal. — Editor.





epitome of good singing and comedy combined.

#### *The Cast*

Fiordiligi .....	Ina Souez (British)
Dorabella .....	Luise Helletsgrüber (Austrian)
Guglielmo .....	Roy Henderson (Scottish)
Ferrando .....	Heddle Nash (English)
Despina .....	Irene Eisinger (Austrian)
Don Alfonso .....	John Brownlee (Australian)

*Don Pasquale* — June 28th.

This charming opera buffa, according to critical opinion, received its first successful English production at Glyndebourne this year. The scenery by Hamish Wilson and costumes by Kenneth Green were both effective and in strict accord with the mode of the time depicted in the opera.

#### *The Cast*

Don Pasquale.....	Salvatore Baccaloni (Italian)
Doctor Malatesta.....	Mariano Stabile (Italian)
Ernesto .....	Dino Borgioli (Italian)
Norina .....	Audrey Mildmay (English)
A Notary .....	Fergus Dunlop (Scottish)

The above cast, while not boasting the names of the last Metropolitan revival, was more than adequate. Everyone was thoroughly at home in his role and during the first scene of the third act a demonstration of unusual fervor for Baccaloni and Stabile's singing of the *Cheti* duet made a repetition necessary. This was done before the curtain while the stage was being set for the Garden Scene. To quote one London critic — "The audience at two guineas a head behaved just like a shilling gallery."

Our adventure at Glyndebourne, which started by chuckling over the intrigue and complications of Figaro's marriage, continued with shuddering at the tragedy of Macbeth and his Lady, enjoying the just deserts of the philandering Don, laughing at the gay cavoritings of the lovers in *Così fan Tutte*, and finally cheering poor old Don Pasquale, has led us to the conclusion that we were most fortunate in hearing some of the best of the modern operatic presentations possible.

Tradition is not entirely observed at Glyndebourne despite the authentic spirit of the performances under the distinctive direction of Fritz Busch, for the piano is used to accompany the recitatives instead of the harpsichord employed in Mozart's time. The spirit of the performance is what impresses; it makes every evening at the opera house a memorable experience. There are no stars, in the ordinary sense of the word. At Glyndebourne everyone seems to forget whatever glory they have attained elsewhere, and all work for the perfect ensemble. This is made possible by extensive rehearsals and the untiring spirit and devotion not only of Fritz Busch, the director, but of all the members of the cast, the stage director, the chorus, and the stage hands.

It is fortunate that the leading English recording company saw fit to perpetuate performances given at this opera house.



# OVERTONES

DURING THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 10TH A SERIES of harpsichord recitals will be given each evening in the Governor's Palace in the Williamsburg Restoration at Williamsburg, Virginia. The series will be held under the auspices of Colonial Williamsburg, Inc., in response to a growing interest in early 18th-century music performed in a contemporary setting.

Mr. Ralph Kirkpatrick, the distinguished American harpsichordist, who gave the first series of recitals last May, has just accepted an invitation to present another series. Programs for the concert have been developed by a Music Committee after extensive research in the musical life of Williamsburg.

We have been given to understand that Musicraft Records, Inc., with whom Mr. Kirkpatrick has an exclusive recording contract, will have representatives on hand to arrange for the recording of any music which may prove of interest for the American music lover. If arrangements can be made, and acoustics permit, it is very possible that recordings will be made in the historic ballroom, where many famous concerts were given in Colonial days.

• • •

Telefunken has sent engineers to Amsterdam, Holland, to make more recordings of the famous Concertgebouw Orchestra, under the direction of its noted conductor, Willem Mengelberg. The latest recordings include Beethoven's *Sixth (Pastoral) Symphony* (Telefunken discs SK2424 - 2428) and Tchaikowsky's *Sixth (Pathétique) Symphony* (Telefunken discs SK2214 - 2218).

The same company lists another recording of Beethoven's *Second Symphony*, by Belgian National Orchestra of Brussels under the direction of Erich Kleiber, who recorded this work a number of years ago for Polydor. (Telefunken discs E2485 - 2488).

Hans von Benda, conducting the Chamber Orchestra of the Berlin Philharmonic, records Respighi's *Antique Dances and Arias for Lute, Third Series*, on Telefunken discs A2535 and E2536.

Toscanini has recorded Beethoven's *First Symphony* with the B. B. C. Orchestra (HMV

discs DB 3537 - 39). This is indeed good news, for no one plays this work quite like Toscanini; and it must be said that the two recently recorded issues of this symphony were disappointing. What Toscanini does with the *First Symphony*, Beecham accomplishes with the *Second*. We daresay that these two recordings will make record history. It now remains for a truly great reading of the *Eroica* to be produced. Possibly England will accommodate us with a recording of Toscanini's reading, since their engineers alone seem to be able to do justice to his artistry.

The Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, under the direction of B. Kubelik, have recorded two of Smetana's tone poems, *Moldau* and *From Bohemian Meadows and Forests* (HMV discs C 2979-81). A number of years back this same orchestra, under Talich, recorded all six of the tone poems comprising the composer's symphonic cycle *Ma Vlast*. Whether the new series will be extended to include the others, we cannot say; suffice it to point out that we have up-to-date recordings of the most popular ones at this time. We are given to understand that these will be issued shortly by Victor in this country.

Bruno Walter records Weber's *Der Freischütz Overture* with the Paris Conservatory Orchestra (HMV disc DB 3544). And Sir Thomas Beecham records *The Flying Dutchman Overture* (three sides) and the *Grand March* from *Tannhäuser* (English Columbia discs LX 732-33).

Felix Weingartner has also recorded Beethoven's *Second Symphony* (English Columbia discs LX 725-28). This was made with the London Symphony Orchestra. With this recording, Weingartner, who has had a lifelong familiarity with Beethoven's symphonies, completes his task of recording the composer's nine symphonies.

The Jacques String Orchestra, an organization new to records, makes Holst's *St. Paul's Suite* (English Columbia discs DB-1793-4) and *Three Dances* from *The Faery Queen* of Purcell and the *Minuet* from Handel's *Berenice* (Columbia DX 868).

The Boyd Neel String Orchestra continues its series of recordings of Handel's *Concerti Grossi*, with No. 7, Op. 6 (on English Decca discs X132-3), No. 8, Op. 6 (Decca X134-5), and No. 9, Op. 6 (Decca X136-7).

Stravinsky's latest ballet *Jeu de cartes* has been recorded by Telefunken (discs SK2460-

(Continued on Page 206)



# FEODOR CHALIAPIN'S RECORDING CAREER

PHILIP MILLER

SURELY NO OPERA STORY BOOK WILL EVER again be considered complete without a picture of Feodor Chaliapin as *Boris Godounow*. The names of the role and the interpreter are perhaps more completely inseparable than any others in the entire range of opera. Other singers have made certain parts their own, but in no case has the supremacy of one been so unassailable. There have been other Carmens than Calvé, other Romeos than de Reszke, other Goose-girls than Farrar, but to those who have seen it there was and can be only one Boris. And this in spite of seemingly unsurmountable handicaps — at the Metropolitan and elsewhere outside Russia the rest of the cast sang in Italian while Chaliapin proclaimed his part in Russian. Furthermore, the opera was given in the Rimski-Korsakov version, which has now fallen into disrepute among lovers of Moussorgsky: still the great basso remains and will remain for many years to come not only the greatest protagonist of the title role in this opera, but the outstanding exponent of the music of the sheerest musical genius Russia has produced.

But *Boris* is only one aspect of the art of this singer. His repertoire of Russian operas was an extensive one (though we in America were not privileged to know it) and he won great acclaim for his interpretations of various parts in the regular Italian and French works. As a recitalist he was one who could always fill any hall he engaged, and it is safe to say that however much one may have disapproved of certain things he did in non-Russian songs there was always ample compensation in the course of his program. His habit of leaving his selection of songs until the actual performance and announcing the titles from the stage lent an irresistible air of informality to these occasions — his recitals never partook of the

stiff formality which makes most concerts seem more like an unpleasant duty than an evening's entertainment.

I shall not speak in these pages of his genius as an actor. Unquestionably he ranked with the greatest of all times, which is an unusual distinction for an operatic artist. The superb figure and bearing of the man and his wonderful mastery of characterization will live only in the memories of those of us who saw him (aided occasionally, perhaps, by a revival of his film performance of *Don Quichotte*) but the voice and personality will be known to future generations principally through his very numerous recordings, and it is with these that I shall concern myself here.

Chaliapin made his first records in 1902 and continued his visits to the studio until a year or so before he died. Perhaps the key to his greatness lay in the total abandon with which he threw himself into everything he did, and it was surely due to this quality that from the first to last he was unusually successful in projecting his personality into his recordings. To anyone who has seen him he lives as truly and vividly in his earliest as in his latest records. In the course of the years he recorded some of his favorite numbers several times over, on each occasion making some new point, or altering his treatment of some phrase, so that it is rarely possible to replace the older recording with the new. I shall not treat of the records chronologically, then, but consider as many of them as I have been able to trace in the natural groupings into which they fall from a musical point of view.\*

\*The numbers given will in each case be the latest recording of the selection under discussion; wherever no electric recording exists the number will be prefixed by an asterisk.



The very number of these groupings speaks volumes for the versatility of the artist. First there are the selections from Russian opera, in which he was unapproached, then the Russian songs — three categories, art songs, folksongs and church music — then the Italian and French operatic repertoire, and finally songs of countries other than his own.

Of course the *Boris* records are the most important on the list. Taken together they cover a rather extensive portion of the opera, and embrace scenes of two characters other than Boris himself. Taking them in order as they occur in the Rimski score, the first is the great *Coronation scene* in which the singer has the assistance of a chorus and orchestra under the direction of Albert Coates. As usual in English and American performances, the chorus sings in Italian while Chaliapin uses the Russian text. The recording of the chorus and orchestra sound a bit weak today, but the disc is worth owning for the one side which contains the proclamation of Boris. (V. 11485). Next comes the famous recording of the narrative of the siege of Kazan, sung by the drunken monk Varlaam in the inn scene. Of course Chaliapin always gave this song with great unction, and though the electric recording is an early one and perhaps somewhat strident it has the singer's inimitable gusto. (V. 1237). From Act II the great monologue, *I have attained the highest power*, and the *Clock Scene*, in which the Czar's conscience overcomes him, were twice recorded electrically, the more complete version, taken at an actual performance in Covent Garden, being superseded by a magnificent later one. (V. 14517). The acoustic recording released by Victor in 1925 is still worth saving because it is coupled with the monologue of the monk Pimen as he finishes writing his history in the monastery. Unfortunately Chaliapin did not re-record that scene. (V. \*6489). From Act IV we have further excerpts from the recorded Covent Garden performance though the record is no longer in the catalogue (HMV DB1183) and a very old acoustic version of *Pimen's narrative*, *Once in the evening*, on a long out-of-print HMV. (\*76446). The whole collection is capped, of course, by the incomparable *Farewell and Death of Boris*, which was powerfully recorded with chorus as long ago as 1927. This is without doubt one of the great records of all time. Chaliapin's performance is superbly vivid and the reproduction is still remarkable for atmosphere. I regret only the general weeping at the end which conveys the

impression rather of the distant barking of dogs. If we were to confine ourselves to one of the basso's discs surely this would be the logical choice. (V. 6724.)

Passing on to *Prince Igor* we find an acoustic recording of the great aria *No sleep, no rest* coupled with the singer's favorite *How goes it, prince?*, which he remade several times. (HMV \*DB799). The definitive version of the latter is on Victor 6867, coupled with *The Song of the Viking guest* from *Sadko*. The rather rowdy song of *Prince Galitsky* completes the list in a performance notable for its spirit (V. 1237).

Unfortunately, the three recordings of the great aria of Sussanine from Glinka's nationalistic opera *A Life for the Czar* were all made before the advent of electrical reproduction. This fact is a rather strange one, for the aria was a favorite with the singer, as it is with most Russians. It is the musing and meditation of the peasant in the story who has led astray the Poles who had come to take the Czar prisoner. This is music so important in the history of the Russian art that we must regret the thinness of the orchestral accompaniment in the latest of Chaliapin's recordings of it (1925) while being grateful for his fine singing. (V. \*6534). Neither the 1902 nor the 1908 version was complete.

The operas of Rimski-Korsakov are represented only by *Sadko*, from which we have the *Song of the Viking guest*. This is the rugged description of his home land which the Norse merchant sings to *Sadko*. The electrical recording (6867) is good, though there is more spirit in the 1923 acoustic.

Another composer too little known to non-Russians is Alexander Dargomijsky, from whose *Roussalka* Chaliapin recorded two scenes. The *Mad scene* and *Death of the Miller*, in which he is joined by the tenor Pozemkovsky, has not been given American release. (HMV DB1531). The patter song of the Miller, however, is so catchy that its popularity was inevitable. This recording and the *Rondo of Farlaf* from Glinka's *Russian and Ludmilla* with which it is coupled are both done with great and infectious humor. (V. 7704).

The song *The moon is high in the sky* from Rachmaninov's one-act opera *Aleko* was recently brought out by Victor in a sort of memorial edition, though the recording was not one of his newest. In reviewing the disc I spoke of the rather thin reproduction of the composer's rich orchestration. I feel, however, that the record should be recom-



Chaliapin  
during a tour  
of Holland —  
"flirting" with  
"An amiable  
Rembrandt"



mended for the fine singing and the genuine beauty of the music though it is not too happily coupled with a Russian version of Massenet's *Elégie* (V. 14902). Another novelty to most Americans is the selection known as *Merry Butterweek* from Serov's opera *The Hostile Power*. As in many of the folksong and religious recordings, the basso sings against a background of unaccompanied chorus. I must plead ignorance as to the qualities of the electric recording, (HMV DB1511) though I can recommend the music on the strength of the 1911 version.

Lastly we have to consider the two famous though little-known arias from the operatic masterpiece of that misguided and neglected composer, Anton Rubinstein — *The Demon*. The record, which is to be found in the historical HMV catalogue, (\*DB611) dates from 1911. The arias are both fluent and effective, and the singing will refute the statement made by my good friend Mr. Moses in a recent issue of this magazine, that Chaliapin lacked a good legato. I feel, on the contrary, that what this singer lacked was the style for certain non-Russian types of music rather than the vocalism necessary to sing them.

Passing on to the Russian art songs, we find the number of recordings from his vast and rich repertoire somewhat disappointing. There are, of course, many duplications over the course of the years, and since, disagreeing once more with Mr. Moses I have said that the actual recording of his voice and

personality was highly successful throughout the entire period of his phonographic activities, it is unfortunate that he did not cover more ground. Moussorgsky, alas, emerges with only two songs. The *Song of the Flea* was done a number of times, and in as many varied manners. Without altering the sardonic import of the song, the singer was to treat a great many details so differently on different occasions that each rendition comes as a revelation to the hearer. If I am to choose one recording from the three I know well I will select the last, which was made in Tokio, February 6, 1933 (Victor 14901) because of the superior reproduction and the piano accompaniment, though in it the voice has begun to show the wear of time and use. On a far higher musical plane is the *Trepak* and the *Songs and Dances of Death* (why did he not record the cycle?) in Rimski-Korsakov's arrangement. Here the singer makes the most of the dramatic picture of the poor old peasant who lies down to die in the snow while death dances the *Trepak* about him. One can only regret the fact that the singer did not use Moussorgsky's original version. (HMV DB1511).

Glinka scores no better than Moussorgsky. I have not heard the electric recording of his famous *Doubt* (HMV DB1469 - listed in the 1933 Victor catalogue as 7679, in preparation) but I can vouch for the beauty and intensity of the acoustic version. This song, so typical of the Russian "romance" of its pe-



riod, is a passionate melody expressive of the doubts which assail a wretched lover, and it finds Chaliapin at his best. This is pure lyric singing, but lyric singing with a dramatic undercurrent. Its emotionalism is expressed not entirely by means of vocal color, but without undue exaggeration. The other Glinka song is a very different matter — *The midnight review*. This ballad tells of Napoleon's return to earth at midnight to review his army. Here we have another side of the great singer's art — the purely dramatic. We do not have to understand Russian to catch the eeriness of this scene. (V. 6619).

The mention of Dargomijsky's songs makes us regret once more that we have so few of them on records. From Chaliapin we have only one, and that has been withdrawn from the Victor list. *The old corporal* will be remembered by most anyone who heard a Chaliapin recital. It is the dramatic tale of the old man going to be shot for insulting a young officer. (V. 7422). Rimski-Korsakov's *The prophet*, another old favorite, is a superb setting of a Pouchkin poem about the divine inspiration of the Lord's chosen. (HMV DB1103).

Of the many fine songs of Tschaiakowsky Chaliapin has left us only two, and neither of these in electric recordings. *The nightingale*, on a Poushkin poem, is the song of a young man who has been driven into an unhappy marriage and now wishes to die. The singing (happily done with piano accompaniment) is that of the lyric Chaliapin. (V. \*6532). *The Pilgrim's song* is too well known to require any special comment, save that when the record was made, in the early 1920's, the basso was in exceptional voice, and the recording is a gem, despite the curtailment of both introduction and postlude. (V. \*1004).

Rubinstein as a song composer does not deserve the oblivion into which he has fallen. The fact that his piano music is so often slight has probably been responsible for the utter neglect of everything else he wrote. Chaliapin recorded the *Persian love song* (*Gelb rollt mir zu füssen*), one of the composer's finest works, and one which places him high in the lists of lyric musicians. Unfortunately, Chaliapin's performance seems to me one of the poorest things he did. Like so many Russian singers he made extensive use of the falsetto (though there is remarkably little of it in his recordings) and the effects thus gained are rarely pleasing to our Occidental ears. In this particular song he robs the magnificent climax of its effect by this disproportioned softening, and detracts

our attention from the fine broad melody to his vocal tricks and whims. (HMV DB1525). Another Rubinstein song, *The prisoner*, has just been released abroad, but I have not yet had the opportunity of hearing it. The music is another dramatic Poushkin setting. (HMV DB3463). This composer's *Night* also is listed among Chaliapin's 1902 recordings. (\*22891).

Sokoloff's *The tempest rages* was recorded in 1910 and the disc is an effective one. The song tells of a lover riding through a blinding snowstorm to be with his lady. I own an amusing copy of this record in the Opera Disc repressing, one of a series of German records imported here after the war. The labels being literally translated from the German — obviously by a German — often make amusing reading. This particular disc is further confused by mistaken identity, for it is called *She made a noise and became very gay*. (\*76435). Another record in the same series is labeled more correctly *She burst into a laughter* — for the song is the one we know as *She laughed*, composed by I. Lishin, a ballad of feminine ingratitude. Both of these old timers are well worth owning. The latter song has been recorded electrically. (HMV DB1352).

Koennemann's *When the king went forth to war* appears in the lists of each of the artist's recording periods, and with its contrast between the pomp attending the king's departure and triumphant return and the peasant's quiet leavetaking and unnoticed death, it was always one of his most effective numbers. (HMV DB1068). An *Elegy* by Karganoff also appears on the 1902 list. (\*22822). Glazounow's *Bacchanale*, or *Pourquoi donc se taisent les voix* (sung in French) is listed in the HMV historical supplement as a 1912 recording. (\*DB629). Among the more recent performances we find Nevstrueff's *Song of the needy pilgrim*. (HMV DA1371). The list is completed by the singer's old favorite encore, *Oh could I but express in song*, by Malashkin. Unfortunately the electric record (DA993) is sung in English — a very poor translation very poorly delivered, — but the 1925 disc is a memento worthy of those recitals we remember so vividly. (V. \*6533). The song, another of those truly Russian expressions of the inexpressable longing, needs just such vocal beauty and intensity as Chaliapin alone was able to give it.

Although taken as a whole the folksong records are in some ways the most fascinating part of this great artist's legacy, they are the most difficult for a non-Russian to write



about, for I must confess that beyond their considerable musical appeal there are a great many things hidden in the words which I do not understand. I shall therefore do little more than enumerate the songs, and call attention to the records which seem to me especially good.

The most famous of the lot is, of course, the *Song of the Volga boatman*, a melody intimately associated with the singer who was responsible for its enormous vogue. It was arranged for him by the composer Koenenmann, who served on occasion as the singer's accompanist. Of the several recordings which the basso made of this old favorite, I consider the last (1936) performance has the advantage of the piano accompaniment and of course the best reproduction (V. 14901), although the 1923 acoustic version is perhaps the smoothest vocally. *Mashenka*, or *They don't let Masha play by the brook* (Opera Disc has it *They don't ordre* (sic) *Masha to go to the rivulet*) is a fine melody, sung without any accompaniment. The electric record, now unfortunately withdrawn, is an excellent one. (V. 1557.) A strikingly similar melody, though broader and very doleful, is labeled on Opera Disc *Little Sunbeam*. It is also sung unaccompanied, and I consider it one of the prizes (\*76438).

*Down the Petersky* is a Moscow street song, full of robust spirit. The electric record has less of this than the acoustic — the performance lacks the old abandon, though there are compensations, such as the bala-laika orchestra accompaniment. (V. 1557). This tune, incidentally, is used by Stravinsky in his *Petroushka*. *Dubinushka*, unfortunately, did not reach electric recording, but the old Victor version is an excellent one. Like many on this list the song is made up of a recitative-like solo with choral refrain. (V. \*1050). *Down the Volga* again provides a contrast between the old (1910) and the new (1923). The latter, done with the splendid Afonsky Choir, is sung in a more arty and elaborated arrangement. I like the simplicity of the former. In both cases the song is sung without accompaniment. (V. 7717). Others done in the same manner include *The legend of the twelve brigands* (1933, V. 7717), *The birches* (1911, HMV \*DB617), *A mother-in-law had seven sons-in-law* (1910, OD \*74612), *Arise, red sun* (1934 and 1910, HMV DA 108), *Not a little autumn rain* (1911, DB 622), *Night* (1910, DB620), and one which Opera Disc calls *The big gnat - Funny song* (\*74613). On the old records of course, the chorus is not notable for tonal quality or

body, but once we accustom ourselves to its sound, the eloquence of the Chaliapin voice makes ample compensation.

Though announced as "in preparation" in 1933, the electric *Siberian prisoner's song* never actually reached the Victor market, which is a pity, as the old version was one of his best offerings. The French HMV catalogue lists it as DB1352. Like the Tschai-kowsky *Pilgrim's Song*, with which it is coupled, the acoustic disc shows the basso in superb form. *Stenka Rasin* was also among those promised in 1933. (HMV DB 1469).

It would be difficult to speak with moderation of the wonderful church music recordings which Chaliapin made with the Afonsky Choir of Paris. The Arkhangelsky and Gretchaninoff *Credos* are among his most popular recordings, and justly so, for they are quite unlike anything else I know. (V. 7715). The effect of the massive choral background against the magnificent tones of the singer is quite overwhelming, and cannot be described. Only less good are the two prayers, *Now let us depart*, by Strokin, and *Open to me the gates of repentance*, by Wedell. (V. 7716).

This brings us to the French and Italian opera list, and here we find more occasion to quarrel with the singer. Being first and foremost a personality, and an interpreter rather than a vocalist, Chaliapin did not scruple to take his pleasure with the notes and directions of the composers whose music he sang. To the extent of his liberties with Russian music only a Russian can testify; the rest of us may rest content that singing in his own language is overwhelmingly moving. But when he applies these tactics to music and words which we know well, the least we can do is wish he wouldn't. His performance, for instance, of the great aria, *Ella giammai m'amo* from *Don Carlos* (one of his famous operas) is dramatically superb — but why must he disregard the dots which Verdi wrote, and which would make the singing just that much more moving? (V. \*88665). His *La Calunnia* from *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, on the other hand, can be accepted as it is, a broad and amusing bit of characterization. (V. 6783). His Mozart, naturally, was unconventional, but his reading of Leporello's catalogue was not too overdone to be enormously entertaining. (HMV DA994). But his treatment of the cantilena in the *Vi ravviso* from *Sonnambula* is a demonstration of what Mr. Moses means by a lack of legato. Partly owing to a desire to



be dramatic even where drama is least in place, and partly because of his way of mouthing Italian words, the melody gets something less than justice. (HMV DA962). For a complete contrast in this delightfully absurd cavatina (neither record includes the cabaletta, which is its most amusing part) we should turn to the polished and poised singing of Pol Plancon as it has been preserved for us.

Boito's *Mefistofele* was acknowledged Chaliapin's greatest impersonation outside of his own native opera, and a good sample is to be had in his *Ave Signor* on the reverse of the *Sonnambula* record. (DA962). Though the recording belongs to the early strident electrical period, the voice is magnificent and superbly reproduced, particularly in the higher register. The famous *Whistling song* and the *Infernal fugue* are also to be had on DB942.

Personally I could find little to admire in his performance of Gounod's devil. The singer's French was worse than his Italian, and his disregard for the composer's line (which is all-important in Gounod) was to me rather depressing. Examples are provided on Victor 7600 (*Sérénade* and *Le veau d'or*) and HMV DB899 (the *Church Scene*, sung with Florence Austral.) The historical list has a 1910 version of part of the latter sung with Michailowa, the great soprano. It is coupled with the *Invocation* by Chaliapin alone. (\*DB618).

One opera which will be remembered only because Chaliapin graced its title role is Massenet's *Don Quichotte*, from which he left us a recording of the death scene. Musically the selection would have been hardly worth preserving, but so magnificently does the artist sing not only the Don's part but also that of the faithful Sancho Panza (the music of Dulcinée is charmingly sung by Olive Kline) that the disc has had a wide sale. Surely only a very great artist could bring this music to life. (V. 6693).

Other arias on the lists include the *Invocation* from *Robert le Diable* (1912, \*DB 106), *Ite sul colle* from *Norma* (1912 and 1924, \*DB106 and V. \*88462), *Infelice* from *Ernani* (1911) and *Vieni la mia vendetta* from *Lucrezia Borgia* (1912, \*DB403), and the *Nilikantha* aria from *Lakmé* (1909, \*DB 617).

The French, Italian, German and English songs which make up the balance of the list

are mostly on the debit side, though there is nothing here to compare with certain German lieder performances I can remember. Perhaps the best of this lot is the Beethoven *In questa tomba* which, while intensely personal, has the quality of sincerity and is not overdone. (V. 6822). There is also much to admire in his singing of Alnae's *Last Voyage* (in Russian). (V. \*6532). The Massenet *Elégie* (also in Russian) has eloquence of the same kind he gave to his Russian romances but will hardly please admirers of Massenet. I definitely do not like his Russian versions of *Die beiden Grenadiere*, (V. 6619) *Der Tod und das Mädchen* and *Der Doppelgänger*, (DB1184), for here the musical damage is far more serious. And as for poor Flégier's *Le cor*, which he sings in French, it is not nearly so bad a song as it sounds here. (DB1342). Finally, as a tribute to our race, he sang Robert Conningsby Clarke's *Blind ploughman*, but I doubt if even lovers of the song have had much pleasure from the record. (HMV DA993).

In the nature of a pendant I should mention the two-record set the singer made from his film *Don Quichotte*, with music by Jacques Ibert. This may not be great music, but it has more vitality than Massenet's, and those who saw the picture are likely to want the records (DA1310-1).

Writing of a Chaliapin concert in London, the late Samuel Langford remarked that if the accompanist had been as great as the soloist the recital would have been an overwhelming success. Thus an astute critic put his finger on the weakness of the mighty. Chaliapin was so towering a singing actor that I feel presumptuous to have leveled so much criticism against him as I have in this article. His best was so good that we should in decency overlook his worst. However, with Chaliapin there was never any room for anyone else, and this alone besmirched his honor as an artist. In such operas as *Boris Godounow* or *Mefistofele*, where the central figure is so conceived that he must dominate the performance, Chaliapin was magnificent, but on the other hand he would sometimes take an unimportant part and enlarge it until he had crowded everyone else completely off the stage. Fortunately, posterity, which will know him only by his records, will not be bothered by this one great shortcoming — it is the secret of those of us who saw him, and it will die with us.



# THE MUSICAL "COMICS"

GEORGE A. BREWSTER

AS A RULE MUSIC LOVERS DON'T HAVE much fun. We take our enjoyment of instrumental music seriously, and the sanctity of the concert hall is seldom disturbed by laughter. In fact (and this seems to apply to the phonophile in particular) we are often regarded as almost fanatically humorless and sour-visaged.

But music has its Comic Section, and it is to the everlasting discredit of the too-serious type of music lover that it is so often relegated to the background. Especially neglected has been that branch of musical humor devoted to caricature and satirical wit; until recently it was almost entirely absent from concert programs. And as far as the recording studios were concerned, musical impishness never got much further than the "Dance of the Mosquito" sort of thing. This state of affairs is happily changing, however. The Ogden Nashes and Robert Benchleys of music are gradually being recognized, and a few examples of their craft have even reached discs. It is my purpose to discuss some of these in the hope that they may relieve a few of you who have been suffering from an overdose of Bruckner.

Humorous instrumental music — that is, music which does not rely upon an extraneous dramatic or verbal association for its effect — is not new. A merry, carefree spirit definitely marks the gavottes, bourées, and minuets Bach and Handel wrote for their suites; the genial Haydn was responsible for many an acid thrust, notably in his *Surprise* and *Farewell Symphonies*. But not until Mozart wrote his famous *Musical Joke* do we discover a great composer frankly exploiting ideas of musical satire in a fully developed work. It is an early essay at burlesque in absolute music, the first chronologically to be found on discs. Imagine a Mozart totally devoid of genius: one whose

attempts at symphonic writing are so positively bad that they're good. Such a man could have written the *Musical Joke*. His efforts to follow the sonata form succeed only in distorting it; he loses himself in a maze of modulations from which a return to the main key is accomplished by brutal force. At one point his melody disappears entirely, forcing the lonesome accompaniment to carry on without help. In the slow movement an untamed cadenza rears its head, and the finale ends in ludicrous harmonic confusion. The recent recording of the work (by the Kolisch Quartet augmented by two horns, for Victor) is satisfactory, though the employment of a chamber orchestra might have captured more fully its symphonic satire. However, these discs amply prove that Mozart was an undisputed master of the diatonic wisecrack.

Yet Mozart seems to have opened a path ignored by his classic successors. Though Beethoven had his lighter moments (and it is amazing how much of his music is joyously humorous) they were more or less incidental to his larger, more profound ideas. But such magnificent touches as the "village band" portion of the *Pastoral Symphony* should not be forgotten. Beethoven was not sufficiently facile to write a thoroughly absurd composition; music was too important for him wholly to repress his innate sobriety.

Whenever the Romantic composers indulged in a little musical leg-pulling (which was not often), it generally appeared as a part of a large, serious work. Thus as a movement of the *Fantastic Symphony* of Berlioz we have the *Witches' Sabbath*, a merciless caricature of hitherto sober thematic material. His almost demoniacal distortion of the "Dies Irae" and of the motto theme of the symphony contrasts violently with the



sunnier humors of Beethoven and Brahms. In this same mood is the *Mephistopheles* section of Liszt's *Faust Symphony*. After building an impressive if somewhat bombastic edifice in the first movement, Liszt tears down the entire structure, piece by piece as it were, and formally burlesques it. The result, although it may not strike the listener as especially funny, is wittily satirical in every respect. Saint-Saëns, on the other hand, keeps his serious and humorous music severely divided. There is not a less humorous work in existence than his *C minor Symphony*; there are few more neatly expressed bits of musical persiflage than his *Carnival of the Animals*. Especially, in this suite, do the more banal aspects of Offenbach and Gounod come in for a good bit of justified scorn, and it is a tribute to the qualities of Berlioz that his *Dance of the Sylphs* survives its temporary guise as a "Ballet of Elephants". In spite of the fact that its satire is rather heavy-handed for present-day listeners, the *Carnival* at least marks an attempt to achieve that which is essential to the type of satire I am discussing: a satire of purely musical values, wherein themes and instrumental devices are in themselves witty, independent of dramatic or narrative associations.

### The Modern Touch

The modern musical comic supplement is rich in this sort of musical waggery, but there is a difference. The tongue in the cheek has been augmented by a thumb pressed firmly to the nose; the playfulness has given place to sarcasm which in at least one case has been sharpened to grim irony. No better expression of post-War cynicism can be found in music than in Ravel's *La Valse*. Here the elegant grace of the Strauss waltz is bitterly distorted, and its sentimental themes subjected to a bath of vitriol. Breathing from its every measure a sense of almost impending doom, it might well be the requiem of a more recent Vienna now no more. But *La Valse* is an extreme example; other satire is considerably less malicious.

Consider the hilarious portrait of *Samuel Goldenburg and Schmühle* in his brilliant orchestration of Moussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. True, Moussorgsky supplied the satire, but it sounds pale indeed on the piano. It was Ravel, who, with extraordinary cleverness, made of this piece a gem of orchestral comedy. So perfectly does Ravel achieve what Moussorgsky only intimated on the piano that, in comparison, a more recent

orchestration of *Pictures at an Exhibition*, made by Cailliet, seems a labored futility, pointing down rather than pointing up the satire.

Stravinsky, among other modernists, is an old hand at musical burlesque. In *Petroushka* we have definite examples of musical satire, pointedly so in the episodes of the bear and the organ grinder. And his *Suites* for small orchestra are splendid fun.

Debussy, too, liked his fun in music. We find him indulging in humor in his *Children's Corner*, written for his small daughter, and in his piano preludes, such as *Minstrels*, *Serenade interrompue*, *General Lavine* — eccentric, and *Hommage à S. Pickwick*. If we fail to laugh at his portrait of Dicken's character, it may be because we interpret Dickens differently from the French; but there's more than whimsical fun in *Jimbo's Lullaby* and *Golliwog's Cakewalk*, and a grand comic strip in the puppet, *General Lavine*.

### Pure Fun

A burlesque of form rather than of thematic material, Dohnanyi's *Variations on a Nursery Theme* is fun pure and simple. Fully exploiting his talents as a craftsman, the composer drags the hapless tune — which everybody knows by now — through a march, a waltz, a scherzo, a passacaglia, a chorale, and a fugue (among other things), before he releases it. And if the absurdly complex introduction sounds vaguely familiar, let the listener recall those pompous orchestral duds that introduce a "special arrangement" of, say, *Swanee River*, on our more super-colossal radio programs. Dohnanyi had already anticipated them, at least in anti-climactic effect.

Putting a simple or overly-familiar tune to elaborate uses is an effective device for the modern musical humorist. The American composer Robert McBride does this in his *Fugato on a Well-Known Theme*, the theme being that nondescript air to which indelicate youngsters sing the words "The worm crawls in, the worm crawls out." McBride's fugato is ingeniously wrought, and in its three minutes' length manages to reveal a startling variety of tonal and instrumental effects. The part scored for bassoon and horns sounds almost dignified, while at another spot a stringent episode for strings suddenly collapses like a deflated balloon. And just before we have had enough of this ludicrous nonsense, it takes to its heels and vanishes. I might call attention to the fact



that certain noted musicologists have been in error in identifying this tune with the Laurel and Hardy theme music. The two melodies are similar, but not identical.

### Sly Mockery

If we imagine that the musical humor of our British cousins has progressed no farther than the beefy robustiousness of the *Cockaigne Overture*, we will not be prepared for the sly mockery of William Walton's suite *Facade*. Unencumbered by the bizarre, Gertrude Stein-ish verses to which this suite originally formed an accompaniment, *Facade* reveals fine musical nonsense. The London Philharmonic Orchestra has recorded, under the composer's direction, nine of the dozen numbers comprising a new version scored for symphony orchestra instead of the limited chamber group first used. A shrill *Fanfare* starts things in motion, then a comic *Polka* precedes a *Yodeling Song* in which the pastoral portion of the *William Tell Overture* is contrapuntally introduced to intensify the Swiss atmosphere. As if that weren't enough this mélange includes a snatch of Rossini's final march theme, sourly dissonant. A *Waltz* of pseudo-Iberian rather than Viennese stamp follows, with echos of Ravel in certain harmonies, and even here and there of Richard Strauss. (The manner in which Walton manages, with such economy of means, to suggest so many styles is a mark of his unsurpassed talent.) A designedly feeble *Popular Song* is one of the succeeding sections; not the usual Hit Parade candidate, but more on the style of those revolting whimsical "novelty" songs of which *Nola* is the most praiseworthy example. The main tune is one of those persistent things that will intrigue you, possess you, madden you by turns; and finally become completely meaningless. The ridiculously timid orchestration typifies the insipid stuff poured out to us a decade ago. Less successful are the *Country Dance* and *Scotch Rhapsody* items in this suite, for the likely reason that the butt of this guying is not familiar to us "Ameddicans." The implications of the *Tarantella-Sevilliana* are clear, however; it is one of those scintillating exercises in six-eight time which entail much Tziganery and tambourine-walloping, finally ending up nowhere. A skillful bit of musical japery, *Facade* offsets some of the more lugubrious "Punch"-drunk English humor with which we are regaled.

To find a parallel for the ironic satire of Ravel, one must investigate the almost disagreeable but not less worthy wit of the

modern Russian, Shostakovich. The awkward grotesqueries of his satirical ballet, *Age of Gold*, are not as accessible in their Pathé recording as domestic discs are, but his heavy-handed mockery of nineteenth-century ballet music is well worth exploring. His humor is well represented in the second movement of his *First Symphony*, recorded by the Philadelphia Orchestra; its angular themes and almost macabre orchestration demonstrate his wry sense of fun.

### A Gem of Musical Wit

Most irrepressibly boisterous of all is the Gallic *Divertissement* of Jacques Ibert. Combining maximum hilarity with craftsmanship of a high order, each of its sections is a gem of musical wit; its spirit of joyous buffoonery has been aptly caught in the sonorous recording by the Boston "Pops" Orchestra. A strident *Introduction* opens the suite: a too-authentic counterpart of the noise without substance that marks certain kinds of modern music. A *Cortège* follows, which leads from a slow introduction to a lively quick-step. For no reason at all the Mendelssohn *Wedding March* is introduced, followed by rollicking jazz effects in absurd incongruence. A return to the quick-step ends this *Cortège*, a comic cartoon in music if there ever was one. We can imagine a mediocre imitator of Ravel and Debussy penning the brief *Nocturne* that follows. (In the Boston recording these numbers are in reversed order, to get the short *Introduction* and *Nocturne* on one record side.) The fourth part is a highly skillful parody on the authentic Viennese waltz; a rich orchestral fantasy in three-four time built on impossibly commonplace tunes, which, at the very end, breaks off into an explosive band-concert close. A *March* to end all marches follows, a condensed "patrol", with a subdued beginning and end, and with a middle section as loud as marches usually are. The suite finishes with a grand *Parade* of a mixed torchlight and circus variety. Ushered in by nondescript bangs on the piano (in this case performed by the noted Boston virtuoso, Jesus Maria Sanroma) the movement launches into a theme similar to *There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight*. The tune is repeated, but not before three most exquisitely sour notes have been brazenly inserted, *molto ritardando*. The rest of this finale, with its sirens in the middle section and the breathless coda reminiscent of all the Von Suppé and Rossini overtures you ever heard, almost (but not quite) reaches the hilarious peak of those three perfect



notes. There is nothing quite like that clarion call of disharmony; it is a non-sequitur not paralleled in all music.

It is disappointing to find American composers so meagerly represented on this roster of musical fun. Should not a country which boasts a literary satire ranging from the cock-eyed pleasantries of Robert Benchley and James Thurber to the biting acidities of George S. Kaufman and the late Ring Lardner have comparable musical parodists? Well, it has one; and his name is Robert Russell Bennett. Bennett's *Concerto Grosso for Dance Band and Orchestra* is worthy of standing beside any of the works mentioned above. His *Variations on a Theme by Jerome Kern* has a warm humor not at all impaired by its great instrumental craftsmanship. His *Hollywood* tone poem admirably lampoons, in one section, certain musical frailties of that community. Yet the recording companies, with their characteristic timidity (which sometimes masquerades under the name of good business acumen) have stolidly steered clear of Bennett's musical banter. But is this situation perchance changing? Maybe the McBride *Fugato* disc is an opening wedge; maybe the harmonic witticisms of Bennett, McBride, and others will be more frequently represented on discs, and America's contribution towards brightening the musical corner will attain its rightful place in recorded music. Or, on the other hand, maybe it won't; and the music lover who seeks to escape eternal solemnity will still be seen wandering glumly about with a copy of the *Parsifal* prelude under his arm.

## PRIZE WINNING LIEDER LISTS

### First Prize List

(The following list and comments were contributed by Mr. Frank P. Lewis, Garden City, New York.)

1. MOZART: *Das Veilchen*, and *An Chloë*, sung by Ria Ginster. Victor disc 1869.

The first of all lieder, *Das Veilchen* has a lyric by Goethe charmingly set by Mozart. In the second song Chloë's roguishness suggests Cherubino. It is a delightful lied.

2. SCHUBERT: *Der Tod und das Mädchen*, and *Die Forelle*, sung by Marian Anderson. Victor disc 1862.

No lieder collection could be complete without Marian Anderson's unforgettable

singing of the first song. The graceful rhythmic pattern of *The Trout* provides good contrast.

3. SCHUBERT: *An Schwager Kronos*, and *Geheimnis*, sung by Heinrich Schlusnus. Brunswick-Polydor disc 35029.

Goethe and Schubert — Kronos' wild ride is effectively set by Schubert. *The Secret* is one of Schubert's most charming lieder; it offers good contrast to the other song; both are essentially songs for a male voice.

4. SCHUMANN: *Provençalisches Lied*, and *Talismane*, sung by Heinrich Schlusnus. Brunswick-Polydor disc 35028.

The first song was rightly described by your own reviewer as an "enthusiastic panegyric of the troubadour love-songs." In the second we have Goethe and Schumann combined; an exalted prayer superbly sung by a great lieder singer.

5. SCHUMANN: *Der Soldat*, and GRAENER: *Vale Carissima*, sung by Heinrich Schlusnus. Brunswick-Polydor disc 35027.

Here is another of Schumann's best songs. Its companion, although written by a contemporary composer, is in the spirit of the best lieder of the 19th century.

6. BRAHMS: *Sandmännchen*, and *Der Tod das ist der kühle Nacht*, sung by Elisabeth Schumann. Victor disc 1838.

Brahms expressed his love for children in the first song, which is dedicated to the children of Clara and Robert Schumann. The second song is one of Brahms' most moving; it is perfectly sung by Mme. Schumann.

7. BRAHMS: *Wiegenlied*; *Vergeblisches Ständchen*; *Nachtigall*; and *Der Jaeger*; sung by Elisabeth Schumann. Victor disc 1756.

A miniature but representative Brahmsian recital, to which the singer does full justice.

8. GRIEG: *Ein Schwan*, and *Lys Nat*, sung by Kirsten Flagstad. Victor disc 1814.

Ibsen and Grieg wrote *Ein Schwan*, one of the most moving songs ever written. In the second, *Radiant Night*, the composer conveys the spirit of Norwegian mountains and fiords.

9. STRAUSS: *Traum durch die Dämmerung*, and *Zueignung*, sung by Alexander Kipnis. Columbia disc 2088M.

Strauss' love songs are like no one else's; in almost all he enhances the poet's ardor with his own musical fervor. These songs are chosen because of their excellent contrast.

10. WOLF: *Auch kleine Dinge*, and *Herr was trägt der Boden hier*, sung by John McCormack. Victor disc 1739.



The first song is so simple and yet so expressive, and the second with its moving perturbation is most gripping. Surely one of McCormack's greatest records, and one of the best to remember him by!

#### Second Prize List

(This list and the accompanying notes were sent in by Mr. Robert C. Hackett, Sunbury, Pennsylvania.)

1. SCHUBERT: *Die Forelle*, and *Der Tod und das Mädchen*, Marian Anderson, Victor No. 1862.
2. SCHUBERT: *Am Meer*, and *An die Musik*, Heinrich Schlusnus, Brunswick No. 85004.
3. MENDELSSOHN: *Minnelied*, *Neue Liebe*, and *Nachtlid*, Ernst Wolff, Columbia No. 4177M.
4. SCHUMANN: *Widmung*, and *Die Lotosblume*, Herbert Janssen, Gramophone No. DA1569.
5. FRANZ: *Im Herbst*, and *Mutter, o sing mir zur Ruh'*, Margarete Teschemacher, Gramophone No. EG3896.
6. BRAHMS: *Feldeinsamkeit*, and *Wie bist du, meine Königin*, Gerhard Hüsch, Gramophone No. EG3308.
7. WOLF: *Der Schreckenberger*, and *Frühlings über Jahr*, Heinrich Schlusnus, Polydor No. 90203.
8. STRAUSS: *Freundliche Vision*, and *Traum durch die Dämmerung*, Heinrich Schlusnus, Brunswick No. 85006.
9. STRAUSS: *Mutertändelei*, and MARX: *Marielied*, Elisabeth Schumann, Victor No. 1661.
10. Reger: *Maria's Wiegenlied*, and *Zum Schlafen*, Elisabeth Schumann, Gramophone No. DA1619.

The lied, possibly more than any other musical form of expression, needs for its most effective appeal a certain personal significance and intimacy in relation to the listener, a quality that also serves to explain the wide divergence of individual preferences in the matter of "favorite" composers, subjects, and performances, because of its very variety of elemental moods and sentimental meanings. For this reason "greatness" of lieder becomes a term referring directly to their relative attractions to individual listeners. A "great" lied, then, is one especially appealing and most completely satisfying esthetically.

To my mind, the lied did not reach full naturalistic expression until Schubert. Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, and other predecessors marked milestones along the way towards naturalness, each one discard-

ing more and more of the artificial aspects of the song while preserving its artistic form, but the last vestige of "classic" artificiality did not disappear until the fresh lyricism and deep sensitivity of Schubert found expression. Unfortunately, I have heard no eminently satisfying 10-inch discs of what I personally consider his greatest lieder: *Der Erlkönig* (which should most properly be sung by a man, ruling out for me Lotte Lehmann's rendition for Columbia, while that by Schlusnus is on a 12-inch disc); *Gretchen am Spinnrade* (both Dusolina Giannini's and Marta Fuch's interpretations are 12-inch); *Sei mir gegrüsst* (both Schlusnus and Lehmann are on 12-inch); *Der Wanderer* (Schlusnus, Kipnis, Tauber, all on 12-inch); *Waldesnacht* and *Greisengesang* (to my knowledge not even recorded). Fortunately, however, there is Marian Anderson's superb rendition of the deeply felt and ineffably pathetic *Der Tod und das Mädchen* and her delightful reading, on the reverse side, of the refreshingly simple *Forelle*, perfect for tonal values and outstanding for the splendid piano accompaniment of Kosti Vehanen as well as the grand vocal work: I have placed it at the top of the list of 10-inch lieder records. Next comes an older disc, which bears a fine Heinrich Schlusnus interpretation of the restrained yet passionately tragic *Am Meer*, with its mystical setting, and of the intensely expressive yet perfectly lyrical *An die Musik*. All four songs, to me, bear the ineradicable earmarks of Schubert's peculiar originality and complete mastery of the lied in both its lyrical and its dramatic aspects.

The next genius to be represented on my list is Mendelssohn, whose *Auf Flügeln des Gesanges* is best rendered on a 12-inch disc by Lotte Lehmann; whose *Est ist bestimmt* and *Volkslied* have no competent representation on discs to my (limited) knowledge; but whose touching last song, the *Nachtlid*, coupled with the gayer *Neue Liebe* and the irresistibly happy *Minnelied*, in their first recordings, win a place in my esteem because they effectively illustrate the charming clarity and impressive directness of Mendelssohn's approach to the lied.

Robert Schumann is the next master of this art-form to appear to advantage. I believe *Die Beiden Grenadiere* is represented only 12-inch discs, as are the best of the songs from his various cycles. *Widmung* is one of the finest of his individual songs, and it was recently given a vigorously impassioned rendition by virile-voiced baritone



Herbert Janssen, coupled with the romantically colored *Lotosblume*, which merits a place in every collection of best lieder records.

Certainly no list of German songs is complete without some of the creations of Robert Franz, who gave all his sensitive and sympathetic understanding to the lied. Margarete Teschemacher's performance of the nostalgic *Im Herbst* and the tenderly simple *Mutter, o sing mir zur Ruh'* is beautifully done. The regrettable paucity of Franz recordings is offset in a degree by this fine disc, the only other worthy Franz rendition I have heard being Conrad Thibault's *Widmung* for Victor on a 12-inch disc.

Johannes Brahms is the next immortal lieder composer I have chosen. To my ears, the best 10-inch record of his recently appeared in Gerhard Hüsch's finely balanced rendering of *Feldeinsamkeit*, with its resigned melancholy, typically Brahmsian *Weltschmerz*; and of that most glorious and passionate of love songs, *Wie bist du, meine Königin*.

Hugo Wolf's great "songs for voice and piano" are represented by *Die Schreckenberger* and *Frühlings uber Jahr*, just recently made available individually out of the Wolf Society issues.

By Richard Strauss, I have selected a disc sung by Schlusnus with rare perception of the meaning and atmosphere of the lyrically vague *Freundliche Vision* and the mistic, crepuscular *Traum durch die Dämmerung*. Elisabeth Schumann gives a sensitive rendition of Strauss' tender *Muttertändelei*, which is happily coupled with the movingly devotional *Marienlied* of Josef Marx, whom I am glad to be able to include with the sole representation of his work I know on 10-inch discs.

Lastly, I have decided to include a recent recording of Max Reger's fine *Marias Wiegenlied* with its wonderful blend of legend and inherent symbolism, and his delightful *Zum Schlafen*, sung with glowing warmth and sweet clarity by Elisabeth Schumann. Reger is another superior lieder composer poorly represented by recordings, and I hope more of his songs, so beautifully constructed with brilliant craftsmanship, may soon be represented.

Another regret is that Lotte Lehmann's best interpretations seem to be on 12-inch discs, but then she has her own albums to delight her admirers.

I submit, then, this list with the belief that an album of these records would repre-

sent a first rank combination of best songs by the foremost lieder composers, as rendered in the rather limited scope of 10-inch discs by a variety of outstanding artists of the form, in the different vocal ranges, against backgrounds of varied but uniformly attractive accompaniments, in many varied moods.

## OVERTONES

(Continued from Page 194)

62). It is played by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, direction of the composer.

(If you wish to obtain any of the discs mentioned in these notes, and your dealer cannot supply them, kindly let us know the name of your dealer and we will assist him, if possible, in procuring the desired records.)

...

Marta Fuchs, who has aroused considerable comment for her *Brünnhilde* at Bayreuth this past summer, records *Brünnhilde's Bitte* from *Die Walküre* on HMV disc DB 4555.

Aulikki Rautawaara, the Finnish soprano, records Brahms' *Sapphishe Ode* and a heretofore unrecorded Brahms song, *Mädchenlied* (3), Op. 107, No. 5 (*Auf die Nacht in den Spinnstub'n*) (Telefunken disc A2538); and Karl Schmitt-Walter records Hugo Wolf's *Benedeit die Sel'ge Mutter* and *Dass doch gemalt all deine Reize wären* (Telefunken A2541).

A recording of Bruckner's *Mass in E minor* is put out by Telefunken (discs E2607-11). It is performed by the Choir and Orchestra of the Hamburgischen Staatsoper, direction of Max Thurn.

...

Cortot records some Purcell pieces, transcribed by Henderson: *Menuet, Siciliana in G minor, Gavotte and Air in G major* (HMV disc DA1609).

...

Italian HMV has recorded a new version of Puccini's *La Tosca* complete, with Gigli as Cavaradossi, Borgioli as Scarpia, and Canigli as Tosca. The recording was made in the Teatro Reale in Rome with the orchestra and chorus of that opera house under the direction of O. De Fabritiis. The recording takes fourteen 12-inch discs.



# EDITORIAL

■ OUR COMPETITION FOR THE BEST LIST OF ten 10-inch lieder records resulted in so many lists that it took us over a week to decide the winners. The committee agreed from the beginning on the winning list, but there were several runners-up for second prize. The first prize went to Mr. Frank P. Lewis of Garden City, New York, and the second prize to Mr. Robert C. Hackett, Sunbury, Pennsylvania. Mr. Arthur H. Sturke of Jersey City; Mr. Edward B. Wisely of New York; Mr. Walter Jennings of Columbus, Ohio; and Mr. John Edmund Kiernan of Washington, D. C., all contributed fine lists, and we wish to thank them for their efforts. Mr. Kiernan contributed some unusual notes, from which we hope to derive an article.

The general consensus of opinion, in some cases assuming the character of complaint, seems to be that an adequate list of lieder could not satisfactorily be chosen from 10-inch recordings. With this assumption we heartily agree, and since we have the nucleus of a lieder collection to recommend from 10-inch recordings, we shall in the near future ask our contestants, and any others who wish to join in, to contribute a list of the ten best 12-inch lieder records. In the meantime, we are offering a prize for the best twelve chamber music sets to form the nucleus of a chamber music library.

Many of the contestants lost out because they selected recordings with trumped-up in-

strumental accompaniments, alien to the composer's intentions. Such recordings, no matter how fine the singing may be, can hardly be termed representative lieder performances. The winning lists, which will be found elsewhere in this issue, vary considerably. We are aware that neither of the winning lists is faultless. For example, we believe that Marian Anderson's singing of *Die Forelle* is less than the best performance available of that song. The Flagstad record hardly captures the full beauty of her voice. We think however that most readers will agree that by and large the list is worthy of its reward.

Mr. Hackett's list contains two records that the judges are divided on — the Mendelssohn and Franz discs. Although both composers may well be accorded a place on a winning list, neither of these records does notable justice to their subjects. Wolff's singing, in the opinion of the majority, leaves much to be desired, and while Teschemacher possesses a fine voice her interpretations of the Franz songs are somewhat on the operatic side. Mr. Hackett's contention that Franz is not worthily represented is a well taken one. Mr. Hackett's notes also helped to influence the judges in his favor.

The most popular lieder singer would seem to be Elisabeth Schumann; she received the most votes. Second in line would seem to be Heinrich Schlusnus and Lotte Lehmann (the votes were even), and next Alexander Kipnis. Mr. Lewis' favorite singer is Mme. Schumann, and Mr. Hackett's is Mr. Schlusnus.

## A Chamber Music Contest

For the two lists, submitted before December 15th, of the best twelve chamber music works to form the nucleus of a chamber music library, we will give:

**First Prize — \$15.00 in records**

**Second Prize — \$10.00 in records**

Lists will be judged by the greatness of the works selected as well as the musical quality of the interpretations. Any make or size of record may be chosen. The only restriction in choice is no set may be broken up. The work does not have to be in an album, and if it is all inclusive on one record, it can be included.

Lists must be typewritten only on one side of a sheet of paper. Comments on the choice of the material will be acceptable, but should be limited to 600 words.

No lists mailed after December 15th will be considered.

All lists must be accompanied by the coupon below, properly filled out. Prizes will be distributed in late December and winners announced in the January issue.

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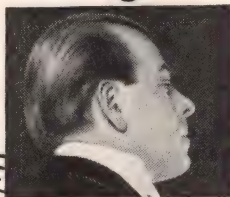
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# Record Notes and Reviews

## Orchestra

BRAHMS: *Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68*; played by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, direction of Bruno Walter. Victor set M-470, five discs, price \$7.50.

■ This recording was issued just a year ago in Europe, at which time it was enthusiastically received. Since then many music lovers in this country have been requesting its issuance here.

Bruno Walter, a particularly ardent Brahmsian, has contributed three of the composer's four symphonies in performances on records. His interpretations of the *Third* and *Fourth Symphonies* are considered among the best on discs.

There is much to say in approbation of this new issue of the Brahms *First*. Perhaps it might be well to begin with the recording. It is less massive than the Stokowski one, and for that reason will unquestionably reproduce better on more machines. It is one of the best recordings of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra existing, being almost entirely free of excessive resonance. The tone behind the orchestra, on the other hand, is alive; and the reproduction of the woodwinds and horns is especially enjoyable. The clarity of the recording is its best feature, and since Walter has taken care to keep the music lucid and songful this is all to the good.

One wonders how many music lovers recall the first performance they heard of a favorite composition like Brahms' *First* when they hear a new one. The fervent shaping of the music here and the splendid flexibility of line that the conductor obtains recalled to me my first hearing of this work. At the time I was in my early 'teens, and an enthusiastic Brahmsian took me to hear it played by an American conductor. The experience proved a disappointing one. I thought it not a formidable work but a deadly one. The conductor hardly did justice to it. It was several years before I could be persuaded to go again to hear the work, but when I did I was deeply stirred. It was at a concert of the Boston Symphony that this occurred. Then and there I realized I was destined to be a Brahmsian. The point

here is that one man's reading of a famous symphony may not be appealing to every listener, but because he dislikes it under one man is small excuse for him to refuse to hear it under another. Because a single reading of a great symphony may not appeal to all, it is fitting that more than one recording of it should be made available. And Victor is to be congratulated on providing duplications of works in the standard repertoire.

Walter's performance here is a most persuasive one, so much so that it would be difficult to believe any true music lover, hearing the work for the first time, would not be captivated by the music. The shaping of the conflicting introduction, with its fervent strength and anxious pulsations, is most impressive. I particularly like the flexibility of line Walter obtains here and later the suggestion of the songful characteristics of the work. There is no dragging here, despite the agitated character of the music. In the allegro the conductor is most careful to define the melodic line, which is all to the good. On the whole I like Walter's reading of this movement better than Stokowski's; there is less weight to the drama, more singing impulse.

Walter is less persuasive than Stokowski in the second movement; he is inclined to overemphasize its intimate, emotional charm. Yet he establishes a rare poetic mood, and as one listens and the movement grows, one forgets any other interpretation of it; which is as it should be, because this music can not be confined to one man's feeling for it.

The gentle humor of the *un poco allegretto* is delightfully set forth. Walter has some original ideas about this movement, none of which is out of line. It is in the last movement that Walter pleases me most of all. The power of the music is retained but it is not overstressed. The introduction is most affectionately shaped, and the lovely horn call (to which one English friend of mine persists in singing the line "O lucky Jim" — although what Jim had to do with it I have never found out) is memorably played. Here again Walter has his own ideas about the music, as for example the pacing of the latter part of the introduction and the maintenance of singing tone in all the great contrapuntal passages.



Having tremendously enjoyed this new performance of the Brahms *First* on records, I recommend it heartily to the attention of all. It is in my estimation the clearest reading of the work on records.

—P. H. R.

...

BRAHMS: *Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Op. 98*; played by the London Symphony Orchestra, direction of Felix Weingartner. Columbia Set No. 335, 5 discs price \$7.50.

■ It has always seemed to this writer that the Brahms *Fourth* is the best balanced of the master's four symphonies. Each of the others contains a movement that seems a bit light for its surroundings—the third movement of the *C minor* and *D major*, and the second movement of the *F major*. All four movements of the *E minor*, however, have broad frames; and the first three are fit companions for the wonderful finale, which, with the last movement of the *C minor*, forms the towering twin-peak of the post-Beethoven symphony.

The only other recording of this work that is worthy of comparison with the present one is the Victor set made by Bruno Walter and the B.B.C. Orchestra. Both conductors are now devout Brahmsians (Weingartner did not always think highly of Brahms); and the two readings throw an interesting light on the aims of each interpreter. Walter is intense and dramatic, stressing the nuances of phrasing, pointing up the beauties of individual sections. Weingartner, on the other hand, is a bit cooler; he subordinates details in favor of the grand line, building unswervingly to the climax in each movement. I am not prepared to say which approach is more desirable, but I suspect that Weingartner's performance will wear better in the long run. The orchestras are about evenly matched (the London Symphony seems much better than it used to be) and both are well recorded. The breaks in the old set are awkward; those in the new one are generally well chosen.

How masterly is the way in which Brahms avoids the obvious here, how beautifully joined are the sections of a movement! Ernest Newman has complained of padding in the Brahms symphonies ("the padding of a genius," he wrote, if memory serves, "but padding nevertheless") but I don't recall that he found any in this work. And how meaningless the old complaint that Brahms' orchestra was too muddy. We learn from his correspondence with Joachim about this

symphony how anxious the composer was to achieve the utmost clarity and smoothness. Would this *pizzicato* sound better if written this way or that; would that phrase for violins be more comfortable for the players if phrased thus? asks Brahms. Incidentally, Joachim regrets in one letter that Brahms had crossed out some introductory measures in the original manuscript, and suggests that Brahms begin the first movement with a chord held for two measures. Joachim makes this suggestion although he realizes, he says, the danger of being put into the same class with a certain Hamburg conductor, who prefaced Mozart's *G minor Symphony* with two additional measures!

The two middle movements may be said to reflect very different facets of the master's character. In the slow movement we have profound melancholy, passionate intensity; in the *Scherzo* rowdy humor alternating with tender grace. Weingartner takes the *Andante* slightly faster than Walter does and makes the *Scherzo* a little broader.\*

The great passacaglia is probably the finest example in Brahms of his mastery of the variation form. This tremendous structure with all its power and expressiveness, superimposed on a simple, eight-note theme repeated thirty-one times, is one of the wonders of music.

—N. B.

...

BORODIN: *Prince Igor — Dances of the Polovetzki Maidens*; played by the Philadelphia Orchestra, direction Leopold Stokowski. Victor set M-499, two discs, price \$4.50.

■ There is more than meets the eye in the title of this recording on the records, for Mr. Stokowski has incorporated not only the Polovetzki Maidens' dances but their choruses and the warrior's dances as well. It is a grand potpourri, skillfully orchestrated and brilliantly performed. Stokowski has a real flare for Russian music, and some of his finest contributions to the phonograph have been of Russian origin.

Prefacing the music with a few ominous bars from the overture, Mr. Stokowski begins with the women's chorus at the opening of the second act, follows with their dance, and then skips to the women's chorus later in the act, and the dances that follow and com-

\* It is difficult to agree with the writer of the notes furnished with the present set that the *Scherzo* "is in Rondo form". The movement seems rather to be in an elaborate version of the conventional *Scherzo* form, with a trio-like middle part.



plete the act. This music is part of a celebration that the chief of the Polovetsi, Konchak Khan, stages for the entertainment of his prisoner, Prince Igor. On the stage this act is perhaps the most impressive and musically the most effective of the entire opera, and its production inevitably provokes enthusiastic applause from an audience.

Borodin did not complete his opera, *Prince Igor*. It remained for his friend, Rimsky-Korsakow, to do this, and it was the latter who orchestrated most of the score. The dances are generally performed in the concert hall in Rimsky-Korsakow's arrangement; and since this composer arranged them from the piano copy of Borodin, Stokowski is fully justified in doing the same thing. Stokowski's arrangement, particularly noteworthy for its clarity and color, deserves to be widely known. The recording is both vital and realistic.

—P. G.

• • •

CHOPIN (Arr. Douglas): *Les Sylphides, Selections*; played by London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction Walter Goehr. Columbia disc 69281D, price \$1.50.

■ If you are not opposed to your Chopin in fragments, you will undoubtedly enjoy this recording of excerpts from the Chopin works used in the complete ballet of *Les Sylphides*. The only composition played in its entirety here is the short *A major Prelude* (No. 7), heard at the opening of the first record side. It is followed by a portion of the *Nocturne in A flat*, and part of the *Waltz in C sharp minor*. On the reverse face will be found parts of the *Waltz in G flat* and the *Valse brillante*. As arrangements go this one is capably contrived. Walter Goehr, with his usual meticulous phrasing, gives a good account of the music and the recording is adequate.

—P. G.

• • •

COATES: *London again* — *Suite*; *By the Tamarisk*; played by a Symphony Orchestra, Eric Coates, conductor. Columbia set X-102, price \$3.50.

■ Eric Coates is beyond question a talented man — far more talented than most of the men who write his kind of music. He does not pretend to any great depth, but writes simply graceful and melodious music, seemingly never coming to the end of his inspiration. The result is not important, but it fills a definite need, and does so far more satisfactorily than the general run of salon music.

*London again* is a more or less recent suite, conceived and carried out in the familiar Coates manner. The first movement is a lively march called *Oxford Street*. The changes are rung on a spirited tune which is likely to remain in the memory after one hearing. Its repetitions are varied with a series of counterpoints. *Langham Place* is the title of the next movement, also labeled *Elegy*. The cast of this section is naturally more serious, and there is some clever handling of modern devices, though the grief expressed — whatever its significance — is restrained and decorous. Finally, a waltz called *Mayfair* dispels the gloom, and all again is bright, cheerful and very English. Mr. Coates should certainly turn his talents to light opera.

*By the Tamarisk* is of less account. This is the sort of thing which Elgar used to turn out in weak moments. Of course we do not resent it so much in Eric Coates, because he writes no *Enigma Variations*. Coming from him this music is honest and harmless. The recording throughout is excellent, and the unnamed orchestra does full justice to Mr. Coates' effective orchestration.

• • •

HUNGARIAN GYPSY TUNES: *Krasznahorka Bűszke Vara* (The Proud Fort of Krasznahorka); *Eltoeroett a Hegedum* (My Fiddle is Broken); *Csinom Palko* (Frisky Polka) — played by Vidak Bela, tarogato, with Berkas Bela, Jr.'s Gypsy Orchestra. Columbia ten-inch disc, No. 381-M, price 75 cents.

■ The feature of this little disc is the tarogato, a Hungarian instrument of unusual and haunting sound. Shaped something like a clarinet, the tarogato has a single reed, and produces a tone rather like a cross between a saxophone and an English horn. It has been used once to my knowledge in symphonic music — a composition called *Hungarian Caprice*, composed by Eugen Zador at the instance of Eugene Ormandy. This work was recorded for Victor by the Minneapolis Orchestra before Mr. Ormandy went to Philadelphia (14031).

The three traditional tunes here presented are very characteristic, and demonstrate the style and capabilities of the instrument about as well as anything could. The first and second of them are appropriately doleful, and the little *Polka* shows the tarogato as decidedly not the most agile of instruments. The accompanying gypsy orchestra does not attempt to supply more than a background,



and this as it is recorded is not remarkable for clarity. Distinctly a novelty record.

—P. M.

MOUSSORGSKY (arr. Cailliet): *Pictures at an Exhibition*; played by the Philadelphia Orchestra, direction of Eugene Ormandy. Victor Set M-442, 4 discs, price \$8.00.

■ Moussorgsky wrote this set of ten musical pictures for piano in 1874, after visiting an exhibition of the works of his deceased friend, the artist Victor Hartmann. The score cries aloud for the bright and varied colors of the orchestra; and some years ago Ravel, at Koussevitzky's instigation, made his famous transcription for orchestra.

The present transcription, we are told, was made by Mr. Cailliet, a member of the Philadelphia Orchestra, at the request of Mr. Ormandy. We may be permitted to admire the Philadelphian's courage in meeting one of the greatest of modern masters of the orchestra on the latter's own ground, and then to ask the following questions: Has he thrown any new light on Moussorgsky's work? Does this album represent a job good enough to compete with Victor's own Ravel set (M-102)?

Cailliet's arrangement is a very capable one. It has a number of clever spots, and the whole thing "sounds". Most of the "pictures" seem overdone, however. The *Ballet of Unhatched Chickens*, for example, sounds, in some passages, more like a cock fight; the *Tuileries* lacks the delicacy, and *Samuel Goldenburg and Schmuyle* the humor, of the older transcription. There is too much of the tuba; and the set abounds in tricky effects that lack the perfect aptness and impeccable taste of the Ravel version. Frequently Cailliet has taken Ravel's instrumentation as the point of departure, making rather elaborate attempts thereafter to avoid further similarities. Thus Cailliet, like Ravel, uses a tuba for the principal melody of *Bydlo*, but orchestrates the middle section differently. The only number that seems to me completely original is *The Old Castle*; and the new version, I think, is as good as the older one. On the whole, I should say that Cailliet contributes little that is new and worthwhile, and that the Ravel version is far superior. As regards the performance, the Philadelphia reading is brilliant, of course, but so is the Boston, which has in addition greater clarity and precision. The present set is superbly recorded. Despite the age of the Koussevitzky recording, I think it is much to be preferred.

—N. B.

SAINT-SAËNS: *Samson and Dalilah, Bacchante, Act 3*; played by Boston "Pops" Orchestra, direction Arthur Fiedler. Victor disc No. 12318, price \$1.50.

■ Saint-Saëns' oriental ballet music, incorporated in the Temple Scene of *Samson and Dalilah* to lend local color, is stage music of effect. Its orientalism, however, is purely superficial; a French imitation of the highly subtle and intricately patterned music of the East. It is without sensibility, but like much of the music of this composer skillfully devised. Mr. Fiedler wisely plays it in a straightforward manner. Those who like this music will find this the most desirable recording of it. The reproduction is brilliant and vital.

—P. G.

## Chamber Music

BACH: *Sonata No. 1 in G major, for viola da gamba and harpsichord*; played by Janos Scholtz and Ernst Victor Wolff. Columbia set X-104, two discs, price \$3.25.

■ Bach wrote three sonatas for clavier and viola da gamba. The first of these, in G major, has always been a work highly regarded by cellists. It is unquestionably one of the composer's most persuasive chamber

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compositions, one in which the melodic writing is both gracious and poised.

Long known and highly prized in a recording made by John Barbirolli and Ethel Bartlett on the modern cello and piano (National Gramophonic Society discs 133-34), this work was due for a more modern recording. It is fitting that it should be performed on the instruments of Bach's day, since the revival of the harpsichord in recent years has brought about a growing appreciation of old instruments.

The viola da gamba is the predecessor of the modern cello. Known as the knee fiddle in Bach's day, because it was necessary to grasp it firmly between the knees to play it, it is a gentler and more mellow instrument than the cello, closely corresponding to the latter in its compass, but having six strings instead of four, and generally a fretted fingerboard.

Janos Scholtz, the cellist of the Roth Quartet, plays this old instrument impressively, and the style of his performance is in keeping with Bachian traditions. Dr. Wolff lends him good support at the harpsichord, although his performance could have been less pedantic and more supple. The older version, by Barbirolli and Bartlett, has more flow and graciousness to it.

The best performances of viola da gamba and harpsichord on records to date are to be found in the last album of the *Anthologie Sonore*.  
—P. H. R.

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BEETHOVEN: *Serenade — Trio in D major*, Op. 8; played by the Pasquier Trio. Columbia set 341, price \$5.00.

■ This little *Serenade* occupies a special place in the affections of lovers of chamber music, though the opportunities to hear it in concert are rendered scarce by the unusual combination of instruments. This combination, too, is a difficult one to write for, since the composer must contrive somehow to round out his ensemble without the body and richness which the second violin gives to the string quartet. Beethoven succeeded triumphantly in this work, mastering both medium and form in a manner remarkable for a young man. We do not know with certainty when this little work was written, but it was published in 1797, and was very probably composed not very long before it appeared in print.

Perhaps of all the early Beethoven works none is more lastingly attractive than this

trio, for it has a bright melodiousness and sparkle unusual in this composer. Still under the influence of Haydn and Mozart, Beethoven wrote with a freshness and spontaneity which stamp the work as altogether his own. Each of its short movement is a polished gem, and because they are many and brief each carries with it the thrill of unexpected familiarity. The music is, like *Hamlet*, full of quotations, though it never loses its own individuality. We can imagine the lover who offers this serenade coming on the scene to the opening *Marcia*, pleading his love in the eloquent slow movements, and expressing his happiness and excitement in the faster ones.

Some three years ago Columbia brought out a recording of this work played by the Hindemith Trio, and the set was considered particularly fine. Now it is easily outclassed as a recording, though the lingering fondness many of its owners have for it may not permit the substitution of the Pasquiers for the Hindemiths. As performances I find much to admire on both sides, with perhaps more of transfiguring spirit in the Hindemith and greater polish in the Pasquier set. For anyone buying the work for the first time the superior recording will throw the balance in favor of the Pasquiers.  
—P. M.

• • •

BLOCH: *Sonata* (1920), for violin and piano; played by Josef Gingold and Beryl Rubinstein. Victor set M-498, seven sides, price \$5.75.

■ This is one of the great modern sonatas for violin and piano, and one of Ernest Bloch's most powerful and personal works. It is Hebraic music of the highest quality; Bloch is an avowed spokesman for his race, and one of their greatest living voices. The rugged strength of the Israelites, the rhapsodic Song of Solomon, the passion and fervor of a notable Oriental race are all embodied here, but without religious connotations.

Divided into three movements, the sonata owns an amazingly contrasted opening movement, one in which there is a play of "elemental and ruthless forces," and rhapsodic passages of passionate fervor. The second movement, marked *Molto quieto* and subcaptioned *molto misterioso*, is poetic rhapsody of the purest quality. Said to have been inspired by a book on Tibet that the composer was reading, its oriental efflorescence is subtly conveyed and not over-elaborate in detail. The last movement has a massive



grandeur, a brutal force that is almost awe-inspiring. Alex. Cohen, writing on this sonata in a program of the Bloch Society in 1937, said: "The obstinate violence of the opening movement and the massive brutality of the closing one are crushing in their effect, and this is hardly surprising, since the first suggests the idea of man buffeted in the clutch of uncontrollable powers, while in the third is pictured a scene of deliberate and pitiless slaughter." Despite this interpretation of the first and third movements, there is no "program" for this work.

Two performances of this sonata are on records. Gamut issued last winter a recording made by Harold and Marian Berkley. At the time that this recording was released (see January, 1938 issue) we remarked that the sonata made tremendous demands upon its performers. The Berkleys gave a sound performance but they did not explore the full range of emotions that are to be got from the music. As one reviewer has said, they contributed a certain eeriness in their performance which was most welcome. But neither of these earlier performers possesses the virtuosity that the music demands. The percussive effects of the first and last movements were not fully exploited. As the writer of the notes states, "the opening and closing movements . . . exact from both players an extraordinary degree of skill in execution; and the resources of tone which the violin here reveals are really prodigious."

Josef Gingold, a pupil of the noted Ysaye, brings to his part all the requisite virtuosity and skill. His is a truly thrilling performance. Rubinstein, who played the work for the first time under Bloch's direction, gives a tonally sonorous and vital account of the piano part. It is no mean feat to play this piano part, for Bloch has achieved his climaxes in the most compelling manner — through harmonic intensification and intricate effects, rather than through dynamic climaxes.

The recording here is superbly realized. The balance between the piano and violin has been expertly handled. This is not true of the Berkley set, where the piano is often overemphasized, and the recording owns a "hollow" quality.

Perhaps a word may be said about the frequent changes of rhythm, accent, tempo and contour of phrases. It will be admitted that these make it difficult for the music to shape itself instantly in the listener's mind. But since none of these actually affects the flow of the music, I am certain that the

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It has been Columbia's good fortune to have two entirely sympathetic artists unite to make this splendid recording. Bach's Sonata is a work of great beauty, widely known and loved by cellists. But since Bach wrote it for the viola da gamba and the harpsichord it is fitting that it should be played on those gracious and mellow-toned instruments.

**TARTINI (Arr. Pente - New version arr. Szigeti): Concerto in D minor, for violin with string orchestra and harpsichord (3 sides); and BACH: Arioso (Largo from Piano Concerto in F minor — Arr. Szigeti).**

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listener will not be retarded long in his full grasp of the music. The power, the surge, and the poetic beauty of this work will not lessen as time goes on, but instead increase in their impressiveness. In significance this sonata ranks with the composer's celebrated *Piano Quintet*.

—P. H. R.

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HAYDN: *Four Divertimenti for flute and strings*, Op. 100; played by René le Roy (flute), Jean Pasquier (violin), and Etienne Pasquier (cello). Musicraft Album No. 17, 4 discs, price \$6.50.

■ These divertimenti are Nos. 1, 2, 4, and 6 of a set of six written by Haydn in 1784 for an English publisher. The flute was a very popular instrument with British amateurs at that time, and after hearing these works, one can well imagine the delight their publication must have occasioned in the hearts of English flutists.

True to their name, these pieces are smooth and cheerful, attempting no recon-dite modulations or probing of emotional depths. They are blessed here with an expert performance by René le Roy and two members of the Pasquier Trio. Each divertimento is complete on one disc, and each disc furnishes a very pleasant seven or eight minutes.

—N. B.

• •

TARTINI (arr. Pente — new version arr. Szigeti): *Concerto in D minor for Violin and Orchestra*; and BACH: *Arioso*; played by Joseph Szigeti and orchestra. Columbia Set No. X-103, 2 discs, price \$3.25.

■ So little of Tartini's music is known here that one welcomes a recording that adds to our meager knowledge of this 18th-century master's enormous output, especially when it offers so attractive a composition as this one. Pente's arrangement, which has been called by a Tartini specialist "not exactly a model", is here presented in a version made by Szigeti for strings and harpsichord. Since I have seen neither the original score nor Pente's edition, I am unable to testify to the nature and extent of Szigeti's arrangement. I can only say that it impresses one as being faithful to the style of the period.

In a treatise on music Tartini wrote that the major mode was "strong, lively and bold" and the minor "melting, melancholy and gentle". The last three adjectives nicely describe the mood of the *D minor Concerto*.

Szigeti plays with his accustomed polish, and the recording is excellent. The Bach *Arioso* is the familiar *Largo* from the *F minor Piano Concerto*.

—N. B.

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## Keyboard

BACH: *English Suite No. 5, in E minor — Sarabande and Passepieds I and II; Chorale: Jesus Christ the Son of God* (from the Easter Cantata *Christ lag in Todesbanden*) (Arr. Copeland); played by George Copeland, piano. Victor disc, No. 15183, price \$2.00.

■ I suppose there is really nothing surprising in the desire of so valiant a champion of the modern in music as George Copeland to record his conception of Bach. However, the disc comes in the nature of a novelty. It might as well be said right out that his playing shows very little understanding of the real Bach style. Or if by chance he is right, and this is the way that Bach should be played, then such artists as Harold Samuel, Myra Hess, Carl Weinrich and Adolf Busch have most certainly all been wrong. It is true that what he does seems to carry his own conviction, but to play fast and loose with the fundamental rhythm as he does in the dances from the *Fifth English Suite* is to ruin all of their charm. As he presents the *Passepieds* one would never suspect that they were meant to be dances at all. Furthermore, he makes full and exaggerated use of the dynamic resources of the modern piano, which, since the effects thus gained were not possible to Bach with the instruments he knew, cannot be in keeping with the composer's intentions.

The *Fifth English Suite* was recently recorded in its entirety for Victor by Yella Pessl on the harpsichord, and her version of the dances here presented will be far more pleasing to the purist. The two *Passepieds* were played a number of years ago, also on the harpsichord, by Wanda Landowska, and her little disc still stands as a model of delightful playing. Interest here, then, centers on the other side, a transcription of the chorale for tenor with unison violins and continuo. *Jesus Christus, Gottes Sohn*, from the fourth church cantata. The tune is that of the chorale which gives the cantata its name. *Christ lag in Todesbanden*, one of the noblest of melodies. Copeland's transcription serves his purposes well enough, but again his style is a decidedly personal one. The piano recording is very good.

—P. M.



BACH: *Nine Chorale Preludes*; played by, Carl Weinrich, organ. Musicraft Album No. 22, five 10-inch discs, price \$5.50.

■ As a welcome change from the flood of Bach transcriptions made by other hands, we are offered this month some arrangements for organ made by Bach himself from various cantata movements. Six of the preludes in this album answer this description; they are called the *Schübler Chorale Preludes* because Bach arranged them at the request of a publisher of that name. The other three are chosen from Bach's numerous organ works.

Bach's love for the old Protestant tunes is nowhere more intimately displayed than in these wonderful pieces. Several of the preludes begin with a lively and extended melody that seems a wholly independent inspiration until the chorale enters; then we see how that simple tune determined the mood and shape and disposition of the new melody, how the sustained tones of the chorale each grew into a whole melodic period in the other voices. Bach's original melody serves as introduction and postlude; it twines its length about the sturdy old trunk and decorates with lovely tendrils the interstices between the limbs. In the other preludes the chorale forms the basis of a development in which all the voices partake.

In the Schübler set is the *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*, known to many pianists in Busoni's arrangement; the miscellaneous pieces include the beautiful *An Wasserflüssen Babylon* and the powerful prelude based on Luther's *Ein' feste Burg*.

The performances are wholly admirable. Mr. Weinrich seems to have a thorough command of his fine instrument, and his resourceful playing makes all the beauties of this music clear. The reproduction of the organ is the best I have heard on records. Mention should be made of the scholarly notes by Herman Adler. —N. B.

CLEMENTI: *Sonata*, Op. 47, No. 2; and HAESLER: *Grande Gigue in D minor*, Op. 31, Friends of Recorded Music Discs 21-22.

CLEMENTI: *Sonata in G minor*, Op. 50 No. 3, (*Didone abbandonata, scena tragica*) FRM discs Nos. 13, 14; played by Arthur Loesser.

The recording of unfamiliar works by lesser composers, about whom much is written without anyone actually hearing the works themselves, should be useful to laymen in helping to evaluate the accomplishments

of outstanding composers. Many features, such as cadences, keyboard figures, modulations, formal organization, etc., which have usually been considered distinctive characteristics of certain famous composers, prove to be merely the common musical idiom of the period, used by great and small alike. Muzio Clementi, "Father of the Pianoforte", has not generally been recognized as one of the inventors of much of the keyboard idiom which influenced the works of his contemporaries, and was expanded in the following generation.

Following the occasion (Dec. 24, 1781) when Mozart and Clementi played before Joseph II in Vienna, the younger composer spoke disparagingly of Clementi's double-note passages and his brilliancy. According to Berger, Clementi's pupil, the Italian admitted that his early style had been exclusively brilliant. The later manner, after

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Clementi settled in London, became more songful and fuller, a circumstance no doubt not unrelated to Clementi's activities as a piano manufacturer. The English instruments acquired a firmness of touch so unlike the light Vienna pianos that no one in Vienna could play on the piano which Broadwood sent to Beethoven in 1818. While Beethoven's piano style was already formed, and his hearing so badly impaired that he can hardly have heard much of the tone, the *Hammerklavier Sonata*, which was written soon thereafter, shows a new style. Beethoven was well acquainted with Clementi's sonatas, although the two men did not meet when Clementi was in Vienna. The history of art abounds in instances where lesser creators have invented effects and technical devices which have been fully realized only by greater masters who have infused them with greater significance and content.

The resemblance of the opening theme of Op. 47, No. 2 to the fugue subject in the *Magic Flute Overture* has attracted considerable attention. Inasmuch as the theme is encountered in an *opera buffa* of Piccini's and in Mozart's own *Idomeneo* (No. 5, Chorus: *Pietà*) most of which was finished a year before the "duel" with Clementi, the resemblance must be fortuitous.

Both the sonatas under consideration disclose an amazing juxtaposition of familiar 18th-century clichés (Alberti bass, scale and arpeggio figures, etc.) on the one hand, with double-note passages and characteristic pianistic effects such as could only have been discovered by a consummate pianist at his instrument on the other. The quasi-improvisatory texture and form of all but one or two of the movements relates them to the Romantics of the following century, when so much of the musical idiom was due to the habit of composing at the piano. Perhaps we are here confusing cause and effect, possibly it was the subjective, personal and introspective tendencies of the Romanticists which made the piano so popular with them.

The title appended to Op. 50, No. 3 is authentic.

Haessler's *Grande Gigue*, although somewhat modern in feeling, is constructed on the lines of the classic gigue for harpsichord, using the Scarlatti virtuoso device of crossed hands and even the old custom of using the theme in inversion in the second section. Haessler received his early training from his uncle, Kittel, who was a pupil of J. S. Bach. A modern reprint of the *Gigue* is found in

Riemann's *Altmeister des Klavierspiels* (Book 1, Edition Steingraber).

Mr. Loesser's performances are models of stylistic purity, good taste and sound musicianship. Many pianists of famous reputation might well envy his limpid clarity and the precise observance of note-values. Musicroft's realistic recording should cause older companies to look to their laurels.

—V. G. B.

LISZT: *Au bord d'une source*, played by Louis Kentner; and DEBUSSY: *Feux d'artifice*, played by Marcel Ciampi. Columbia disc No. 69308, price \$1.50.

■ Kentner continues his series of Liszt recordings with a finished performance of *Beside a Spring*, No. 4 of the *Années de pèlerinage — First Year*. As an atmospheric picture the composition is pleasant enough but musically it seems somewhat empty. It is well recorded. Debussy's *Fireworks* receives a capable reading on the other side of the disc; the recording of this piece, we understand, dates back some years, which may account for the overweighted bass. On some machines this may give the impression of a heavy-handed performance.

—N. B.

PROKOFIEFF: *Program of Piano Music*; played by Serge Prokofieff. Victor set M-477, price \$8.00.

■ Of all the composers writing today, it seems to me that none knows more definitely what he wants to say or how to say it than Serge Prokofieff. He has had an interesting, adventuresome life, what with his early experiences in the conservatory at St. Petersburg, the outbreak of the war just as he was ready to begin winning his spurs, and his subsequent travels over the civilized world. He has been hooted and applauded, but he has gone his quiet way, composing as he knew how to compose, expressing effectively what he wanted to express. This supreme self-confidence has been tempered by a redeeming sense of humor and a faculty of self-criticism unusual among composers. To cap all these virtues he is really a first-rate pianist (it was his piano playing and not his compositions which won him a graduation prize at the conservatory) and so he is able to be his own missionary.

The pieces in this set are all brief, and some of them are surprisingly gentle. This quality, however, is by no means out of character, though we may think of Prokofieff as



a lover of the unusual and the shocking. The more we study his work the more we are convinced that behind the often courageous exterior is a keen and logical mind, and a sense of form and balance extremely rare among his contemporaries. It is this side of Prokofieff which will stand out in the memory after hearing this well-recorded set. The program is as follows: *Andante*, Op. 29; *Gavotte*, No. 3, Op. 32; *Gavotte*, No. 2, Op. 25; *Contes de la vieille grand'mère*, Op. 31, Nos. 2 and 3; *Etude*, Op. 52; *Suggestion diabolique*, Op. 4, No. 4; *Visions fugitives*, from Op. 22.

This is not the first time that Prokofieff has appeared on records as his own interpreter, and it might not be amiss to commend to those who enjoy this set his *Third Concerto*, Op. 26, which he played with the London Symphony Orchestra under Coppola (Victor set M-176). —P. M.

## Vocal

BEETHOVEN: *An die ferne Geliebte*, Op. 98; *Andenken (Ich denke dein)*; sung by Gerhard Hüsch, baritone, with piano accompaniment by Hanns Udo Müller. Two Victor discs, Nos. 12246-12247, price \$1.50.

■ This song cycle is universally conceded to be Beethoven's finest contribution to the literature of song. In fact there are many who would go so far as to call it his only important contribution. It is certainly true that the best of his other songs are the simplest and most unaffected ones, but of these there are a few with which we would not willingly part. None of them, however, challenges the superiority of *An die ferne Geliebte*, for it is the least conventionalized of all his works for voice and piano.

Generally speaking Beethoven was too much the absolute musician to be a successful song writer. He was never able to free himself from purely musical conventions sufficiently to bring the fullest meaning out of words. To him a text was a hindrance rather than a help — his approach to it was the exact opposite of that of Hugo Wolf, in whose songs the melody grew directly out of the flow of the text. But in this little cycle something seems to have happened to Beethoven for we find very little of the conventional in it, and though it speaks with the now old-fashioned accents of its day, it has still something to say to us of over a century later. The cycle was composed in 1816, to poems by A. Jeitteles.

The six songs of this cycle are so run in together that they are inseparable. Through-

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(Continued on Page 221)



out the set the note of longing predominates. The lover sits upon the hillside and wishes that his beloved were with him. The first song is built with the greatest thematic economy, one phrase furnishing the melodic germ. For once we find Beethoven writing definitely for voice and not in an instrumental style, and the result is often quite Schubertian, especially in the song *Es kehret der Maien*. The sixth song *Nimm sie hin, denn, diese Lieder* has a particularly appealing melody.

*Andenken*, the song which fills the odd side, is an extreme example of the typical Beethoven lied. The melody has little bearing on the words, the accompaniment is conventional, and the extensions at the end are dragged out mercilessly.

Hüsch sings in his familiar manner, though perhaps less evenly than has sometimes been the case on his records. He starts the cycle rather metronomically, but gradually finds his stride, from which point on his singing is first-rate. Of course he is given good support by Hanns Udo Müller, and the recording is well balanced. —P. M.

• •

BEETHOVEN: *Fidelio* - *Abscheulicher, wo eilst du hin?*, sung by Kirsten Flagstad, soprano, with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Eugene Ormandy, conductor. Victor disc, No. 14972, price \$2.00.

■ When this disc appeared in England some months ago (so many American recordings have a way of making their débuts abroad) the critic in *The Gramophone* said in part: "The vocal line is admirable, the tone is gorgeous, the interpretative skill is slight. The dramatic significance comes almost entirely from the singer's ability to negotiate the vocal line; in other words it owes much to Beethoven and little to Flagstad." If these words had come from my own typewriter they would have constituted the highest praise possible for me to give the singer, but it seems that they were not meant in that spirit, for the reviewer continues, "To me, then, her Leonora is a bitter disappointment."

Now for my own part, in such music as this what I do not want is "interpretation". Admirers of Toscanini never tire of praising his ability to "let the music speak for itself". This, too, is the secret of the greatness of Flagstad, for even more than the sheer splendor of her voice it is her sincere and modest approach to the composer's music which impresses the sensitive listener. She does not add

to this music, but simply translates it into the tones of her voice by means of her understanding and musicianship. This is not "interpreting" as so many Italians interpret, but it is singing of the highest order. Now, however, I must confess that in this record I too am a bit disappointed. It is not that either the performance or the recording is short of magnificent — for both are that — but that the singer comes so near to absolute perfection without quite achieving it. Technically the only fault I can find in her performance is an occasional tendency to clip phrases, but from a purely esthetic point of view I feel there is just the shade of a quality missing. This is a certain intensity of expression which Frida Leider, with a less perfect vocal equipment and with a musicianship no less immaculate than Flagstad's, was able to infuse into her now long withdrawn Victor record of this great *scena*. Of course there is no comparison between the two discs — Leider never was blessed with such superb reproduction as this, and the fine clarity of Mr. Ormandy's orchestra more than makes up for the lack I have been petty enough to find in the singing.

—P. M.

• •

BIZET: *Carmen* - *Seguidilla*; and *Voyons que j'essaie à ma tour*, sung by Bruna Castagna, contralto, with orchestra, Wilfred Pelletier, conductor. Victor 10-inch disc, No. 1936, price \$1.50.

■ It is of course high time that Bruna Castagna should be heard on records, and it is only natural that her first release should be devoted to some of the music from her most celebrated impersonation. This is all to the good, too, as first-rate *Carmens* have not been too plentiful since the inception of electric recording. Good versions of these numbers have been needed — in fact the need for a good *Habañera* is still to be met. The best previous electric *Seguidilla*, so far as I know, was that very early one by Marguerite D'Alvarez, whose temperamental singing made up in large measure for her sins against pure intonation. If there has been a first-rate *Card Scene* I have not heard it.

Mme. Castagna has both a beautiful, sensuous voice and a real *Carmen* temperament. In vocal quality as well as in her general approach to the music she reminds me of the old acoustic recordings of Maria Gay. Her *Carmen* is rather elemental than subtle, a wild animal rather than a schemer. She does not color her voice as skillfully as did Calvé, nor has her *Seguidilla* either the amazing



vocal smoothness which older collectors will remember from the ancient Matzenauer disc, nor the theatricality which marked that of Geraldine Farrar. But her record is good enough to send us back to the shelves to bring out all the old favorites for comparison — which means that we accept her as one of the royal line of Carmens. She is given good support by the orchestra under the Metropolitan's Mr. Pelletier, and the recording does full justice to her rich and fascinating voice.

Perhaps one word should be added about Castagna's French, which is not precisely Parisian, but neither was Carmen.

—P. M.

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COUPERIN: *Third Tenebrae Service for the Wednesday in Holy Week* (arr. Arthur Hoérée); sung by Archimbaud and Wetchor, sopranos; Derenne and Cuenod, tenors; with Mme. M. de Lacour, harpsichord, Mme. Bracquemond, organ, M. Adriane, trumpet, and Orchestre Feminin de Paris; Jane Evrard, conductor. Two Victor discs, Nos. 12325-12326, price \$1.50 each.

■ Here is an eye-opener for all who think of Francois Couperin simply as the composer of pleasant little descriptive pieces for the harpsichord. I am afraid that takes in most of us, because of all his music only these charming trifles are generally performed. Many of us have wondered just why he was dubbed "Couperin le grand", for on the strength of what we know of his music the title is decidedly flattering. These two discs furnish one answer.

This *Troisième leçon de ténèbres pour le Mercredi* is one of a proposed set of nine which Couperin began but never finished. The realization of the figured bass and the distribution of parts, besides the somewhat elaborated orchestration, are the work of the distinguished French critic and composer, Arthur Hoérée. What he has done may at first seem shocking to the purist, but I think everybody will agree that it is justified, in part at least, by the liberality of the composer's preface. Couperin tells us that two voices will suffice, and that their parts may be transposed if that is necessary to suit the type of voice available. He concludes, "If one can add a bass viol or a violin to the organ or harpsichord accompaniment, it will be well to do so." Hoérée may have overstepped these instructions, but the composer seems not to have been too particular.

## RECORD BUYERS' GUIDE

(Continued from Page 219)

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H. Royer Smith Co.  
10th and Walnut Streets

(Continued on Page 223)



In any case the arrangement is effective, and in no way obscures the impressiveness and nobility of the music. I do not know of any other sacred work which has quite the flavor of this one, partaking as it does of the floridity of the ancient Jewish chant (or is it the floridity of Couperin's school of harpsichord writing?) and the exalted expressiveness of the music of the church. One could take this fusion as a starting point in a study of influences in seventeenth-century music. However, what concerns us here is the great beauty of the work. Such passages as the *O vos omnes* (sung by the two tenors) or the final *Jerusalem convertere* (in which Horee has the mixed chorus double in two parts — a novel and amazingly striking effect) are not to be forgotten easily. Generally the arranger has alternated the two tenor voices with the other combinations to give variety. This device is simple enough, and it seems to me to be quite in keeping.

As for the performance, it is on the whole an outstandingly satisfactory one. A certain tentativeness in the treble solo part results from the participation of a male soprano, but this we can bear because of the general excellence of the voices. Derenne and Cuenod, the two tenors, should be singled out for especial praise. The recording is excellent. These two discs can be recommended to any collector not too much bound up in what he already knows and likes, for they should have a far wider appeal than their title would indicate. —P. M.

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DONIZETTI: *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Opera in 3 Acts; recorded by Principals, Chorus, and Orchestra of La Scala Theatre, Milan, under the direction of Lorenzo Molajoli. Columbia Operatic Set No. 20, thirteen discs, price \$19.50.

Cast: Lucia, Mercedes Capsir; Lord Enrico, Enrico Molinari; Sir Edgardo, Enzo De Muro Lomanto; Lord Arturo, Emilio Venturini; Raimondo, S. Baccaloni; Alisa, Ida Mannarini; Normanno, Emilio Venturini.

■ Donizetti's music belongs to a bygone era. As F. Bonavia, the English-Italian critic, says: "it has aged considerably since his death. Nor could it be otherwise considering the conditions in which it was written." Donizetti wrote at white heat, practically never revising, composing a whole opera, as in the case of *Il campello di notte*, in nine days, and often writing the better

part of an act in less than a day. He was a true product of his age—an age of vocal virtuosity. His interpreters, Bonavia points out, being some of the greatest singers of all times, such as Mario, Rubini, Grisi, etc., "it would be difficult to determine whether he was under a heavier debt to them than they were to him."

In twenty-six years, from 1818 to 1844, Donizetti wrote and produced no less than sixty-three operas. Two others produced after his death bring his complete output up to sixty-five. *Lucia*, generally conceded his most popular opera, was written for the Naples opera in 1835; the parts of Edgardo and Lucia being composed especially for two of the most accomplished singers of the 19th century, Gilbert Duprez and Fanny Persiani. The survival of this opera as well as certain others in the repertory today, outside of Italy, is generally due to the desire to exploit famous singers. In Italy, however, it is the music as well as the singers that count, for the Italians intimately know and love their old-fashioned operas, particularly those in which the tunes are easily assimilated. And *Lucia* is no exception to the rule.

The type of performance in this recording would suffice for the best Italian standards, but hardly for the leading opera houses of England or this country. I have heard just such performances as this in Italy in the best houses there, performances in which the principals were no more distinguished than they are here, in fact less so. This, however, never dimmed the audience's enthusiasm. There is something about the enthusiasm of an Italian audience that is contagious.

Capsir is not unfamiliar to the record buyer. She can hardly be said to possess a great voice, but she is a reliable singer with the requisite pliability of voice for ornamentation and assured top notes, albeit these are often thin and excessively metallic. De Muro Lomanto has a substantial tenor voice, but he is an uneven singer. His best work here will be found in the latter part of the opera. Vocally, Molinari is the most satisfying member of the cast. The balance of the ensemble and the chorus acquit themselves acceptably, and so does Molajoli, the conductor. The recording, dating back several years, is consistently good. This is definitely a set for those who like the music of *Lucia*, regardless of the calibre of the singing.

—P. H. R.



FOLKSONGS FROM GOWER: *The Gower Was-sail Song*; *Young Henry Martin*; sung by Philip Tanner, folksinger, unaccompanied. Columbia ten-inch disc, No. 372-M, price 75 cents.

■ In contrast to a great deal which passes for folkmusic, but which should more properly, I think, be classed as the work of arrangers — some of whom have done elaborate and masterly jobs — this record comes with more than a small amount of pleasurable novelty. Here is the genuine article—whether or not it appeals to our sophisticated tastes. Philip Tanner makes no pretensions of any kind — he has no voice; he is, I am told, over eighty years old; he is not concerned with such matters as strict intonation or musicianly phrasing. He simply sings his songs with a great relish and conviction, breathing when he needs breath but never allowing his concentration on the message of his song to slacken for an instant. He is not burdened with any kind of accompaniment, so he can sing in his own way and in his own time — and he does so without any trace of inhibitions. As to diction, his work might be taken as a model, and indeed many professional singers could profit largely from studying his approach. The really great singers are those who retain what Philip Tanner has in spite of vocal culture and musical training.

The two songs on this disc are as delightful as the singer's manner. *Young Henry Martin* is a famous old sea ballad well-known in many varying versions. *The Was-sail Song* is not the tune made famous by Vaughan Williams and the English Singers (although it traces the same ancestry) but will be familiar to many in the choral arrangement of Holst.

Gower is an English settlement in Wales. The British Columbia Company made this and one other disc of Mr. Tanner's singing there a couple of years ago. The other is in some ways even choicer than this one, so let us hope the domestic house will see fit to release it here.

—P. M.

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HOLMES: *Au Pays*; PESSARD: *Requiem du Coeur*; sung by John Charles Thomas, baritone, with piano accompaniments by Carroll Hollister. Victor disc, No. 15184, price \$2.00.

■ Mr. Thomas' admirers have had to wait a long time since his last offering, and I am afraid the more seriously musical of them

have never before had a chance to hear him in recordings of songs as good as these. To be sure they must still wait for great songs, but these are effective, and if not repeated too often they will give pleasure. I suppose both of them might be classed as "French he-man songs", and both are favorites with Mr. Thomas and his audiences.

Augusta Holmès was an Irish-Frenchwoman who studied with César Franck, and wrote among other things a not inconsiderable number of distinctive songs. *Au Pays* is a kind of march-song, with approaching and receding effects. The soldiers are returning home, to meet their old sweethearts, but not all of the girls have been content to wait for their return. So for the disappointed one there is nothing to do but go back to the front.

## RECORD BUYERS' GUIDE

(Continued from Page 221)

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*Requiem du Coeur* is a macabre drinking song, pretty well summed up in its first words — "My heart is dead." Needless to say Mr. Thomas sings it with unctiousness.

There can be little doubt that this baritone possesses one of the great voices of our time, or that his diction is a model of clarity. Vocally and stylistically he seems to belong somewhere between Titta Ruffo and Mattia Battistini, for he has both the bigness of the one and the suavity of the other. With all of this, however, there is a certain superficiality and coarseness in his singing which may be in part a result of his many years of "giving the public what it wants". There is, of course, no call for refinement in either of these songs, but that fact may make us regret so much the more that they are fairly typical examples of the art of one of the most gifted singers of our day. The recording of the voice is very lifelike, but Mr. Hollister's excellent accompaniments are a bit in the background.

—P. M.

KODALY: *Evening*; sung by the Augustana Choir, direction Henry Veld. Victor disc No. 1937, 10-inch, price \$1.50.

■ This admirable choir, which visited our shores during the recent Swedish Tercenary, made a record of two native compositions, which we reviewed last month. Here, the choir sings in English a composition by the contemporary Hungarian composer Kodaly. Once again we must commend this Swedish organization for its precision and warmth of tone. Kodaly's composition is one of marked originality, an intense and telling setting of a nocturnal poem. The recording here is unfortunately less successful than in the disc reviewed last month, a noticeable shattering being apparent in the soprano tones in the climactic passages. It is possible that this can be controlled on some machines.

The English translation of Elizabeth M. Lockwood is here given by courtesy of RCA Victor:

"Softly whispering winds are sighing,  
Evening's crimson glow is dying,  
Fades away evening's crimson glow.  
Where the sunset clouds shone resplendent,  
Eve's pallid star overhead shines now.  
Soon will rise the silver moon,  
Filling heaven's vault with splendor,  
Voices of the earth grow silent.  
Now echoes from heaven celestial music,  
And souls who hear it,

Slowly, calmly sink to rest  
In slumber's soft and gentle arms."  
—P. H. R.

• • •

MILHAUD: *Chants populaires hebraïques: La Séparation; Berceuse; Le Chant du veilleur; Chant de la Délivrance; Gloire à Dieu; Chant Hassidique*; sung by Martial Singher, baritone, with piano accompaniment by Darius Milhaud. Two Columbia ten-inch discs, Nos. 4213-M, 4214-M, price \$1.00 each.

■ There are many facets to the art of Darius Milhaud — he is certainly one of the best rounded personalities among contemporary composers.

The *Chants populaires hebraïques* belong to the not inconsiderable literature of racial music which has been built up by the various modern Jewish composers. Ravel contributes to this literature, as well as Ernest Bloch and Milhaud himself in his earlier *Poème juifs*. In this music the aim has been to preserve the character of the ancient Hebrew chant — the distinctive floridity and modality which flavor these chants — while writing in the modern idiom. Milhaud has been particularly successful in this, and these *Chants* belong among the worthwhile things in modern song.

The little cycle comprises six brief songs, well contrasted and effectively grouped. In this recording there has been an unimportant change in order which brings two of the shorter songs together on one side. Incidentally the label complicates things further by again reversing the order of the two titles.

*La Séparation* propounds a bit of practical philosophy: it does no good for the Lord to increase our families if our money is not increased too. There is an elemental and haunting refrain on the words *Bonne semaine*. In the *Berceuse* the baby is informed that Papa will go to town and bring back an apple, among other things. *Le Chant du veilleur* is one of the most striking of the songs: Everyone sleeps and rests in peace, forgetting the bustle of the day — I alone seek in vain to sleep on the rocks. Who goes there? *Chant de la délivrance* is a song of consolation by faith. *Gloire à Dieu* is a kind of psalm, concluding with the thought, All my hope is in the Lord of Sabaoth. Finally the *Chant Hassidique* is a number song, a type familiar to all races and creeds. Seven is for the Sabbath, six for the Talmud, five for the Bible, four for the ancestors, three



for the patriarchs, two for the tables of the law, and one for our God — he that has no equal.

M. Singher is a baritone much admired in France, and much in demand among composers who are looking for sympathetic interpretation. —P. M.

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MONTEVERDI: *Madrigals and Other Works*; performed by Vocal and Instrumental Ensemble under the direction of Nadia Boulanger. Victor Set M-496, five discs, price \$7.50.

■ The revival of old music via the phonograph has never been better served than in this collection of recordings. Nadia Boulanger, one of the foremost musical scholars of modern France, has selected and arranged a group of works by one of the greatest composers prior to Bach. The purist may decry Mme. Boulanger's use of the modern piano instead of the harpsichord in these recordings, but he can not similarly decry her skillful arrangements and her expert direction of the performances.

It has been my privilege to prepare the booklet for this set, and to provide translations of the texts. My initial experience with this group of recordings has been an entirely enjoyable one, and I mark the set as one of the most rewarding in existence of the music of former times. In a day and age such as we live in, when the world is lacking in spiritual compulsion and in charity, music like this is a refuge to the troubled spirit. More than an escape it is a deeply rewarding experience.

There are five madrigals recorded here; also a chaconne for two voices and continuo; a duet for two tenors and continuo; a *Romanesca*; a *Canzonetta*; and extracts from a ballet. All the music represents the genius of Monteverdi in a worthy manner, and conclusively proves that his command of emotional expression was exceptional. He was a great polyphonist of the early 17th century and a master of all the forms of music known in his time.

Monteverdi played such an important role historically in the advancement of opera that his remarkable abilities as a composer of madrigals and masses are often overlooked. A true conception of his creative powers can only be formed by knowing these latter works as well as his operatic contributions. Too few of Monteverdi's works are on records and perhaps none represents him as fittingly as this collection. Certainly the

previous recordings of his lovely madrigal for five voices, *Ecco mormorar l'onde*, has never been previously rendered with the artistry with which it is done here.

The first record contains a madrigal, *Hor che'l ciel e la terra*, a setting of the first part of a sonnet by Petrarch. The contrasts here, dictated by the text, are vivid and acute. This is followed by a setting of Arianna's *Lament* from the opera *Arianna*, in an arrangement for five voices and continuo made by the composer himself. In the recording it is unfortunate that more time was not allowed between these two compositions, but this does not necessarily vitiate one's pleasure in them.

The second disc contains a chaconne, *Zeffiro torna*, a wholly carefree song based on a ground bass of two bars. It is refreshing music which one finds oneself humming again and again, and it is delightfully sung and played here.

Disc three contains on one side a duet for two tenors and continuo, *Ardo*. There is rich beauty in this work, which is heightened by the impersonal treatment of the poem. On the reverse side of the record are two compositions: *Ohimè, dov'è il mio ben*, a *Romanesca* for two voices and continuo, a simple, moving song, canonical in style; and a *Canzonetta* — *Chiome d'oro*, also for two voices and continuo, full of rhythmic buoyancy.

Disc four contains excerpts, ingeniously arranged, from a ballet, *Il Ballo delle Ingrate*; and disc five contains two madrigals; *Lamento della Ninfa* and *Ecco mormorar l'onde*. The first is for three male voices and a soprano, a song of dramatic contrasts, and the second is a morning serenade derived in style from the popular songs of Monteverdi's day.

The quality of the music in this album is of a high order, and the pleasure to be derived from these recordings cannot be overestimated. I recommend this set to the attention of all readers.

—P. H. R.

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RIMSKY-KORSAKOW: *Song of the Village Mayor* (from the opera *May Night*); KOLITCHEW: *The Boatmen of the Volga* (arr. Alexandroff); sung by the Choir of the Red Army of the U. S. S. R., A. V. Alexandroff, conductor. Columbia ten-inch disc, No. 4215-M, price \$1.00.

■ In the July issue of this magazine I had occasion to admire the first release in this country from a series of recordings made by



this splendid male chorus at the Paris International Exposition last year. All the praise which that recording merited can be justly repeated here, with an added salvo for the music on this disc. It might be too much to say that these selections are more interesting than the others, but because they are quite different they should not be taken for granted.

But different as they are they are quite as typically Russian. The scene from Rimsky-Korsakow's unfamiliar opera is a hearty piece of music, given flavor here by the use of an accordion in the accompaniment. There is an excellent tenor solo sung by Joseph Laute. The real feature of the disc, however, is the song on the other side, though its composer bears a less illustrious name. This is not the famous *Volga Boat-song* nor yet the other familiar tune which Americans know as *Down the Volga*. This one is a broad and haunting melody, very sombre and very Russian. As presented here it rises to a breath-taking climax and then subsides to a soft ending. This time the balalaika is used in the accompaniment, and there is a bass solo well sung by M. Sokhtchinsky. The recording is superb.

—P. M.

#### European Recordings

■ At the invitation of RCA Victor, we recently compiled another group of recordings, selected from the outputs of their European associates. This list, containing some fifty-odd items, can be procured through your dealer. It is known as "A Connoisseur's List of Victor Red Seal Records". If you are unable to obtain a copy of this booklet we will be glad to see that you get one.

In selecting this list of recordings, we have been guided by the requests and wishes of many of our readers, who have from time to time written to us and asked us to exert our influence towards the issuance of various foreign recordings in this country. As the list has been chosen with much thought and care and is not limited to any one type of music, we hope that the music lover will not confine himself to any one part, but will investigate music in all its sections, for in each there are musical treasures of enduring worth. Although it may be possible to better the performances in some instances, in all cases we believe the music lover will agree with us that the performances are worthy of praise.

A few items from this list are reviewed in this issue. We shall endeavor to review next month as many more as is possible.

—The Editor

## Record Collectors' Corner . . . .

Julian Morton Moses

So much excitement is to be found among the re-pressings clamoring to be reviewed that there remains little space or energy for anything else. It should be noted, however, that there is unusual interest at this time in the many selections that were recorded in bygone days and then never released. Three, at least, of the items to follow fall into this category. How many others there are, we may never know unless tests or hidden matrices turn up further to torment or delight us. It is a curious thing that few of the great recording stars of the acoustical era remember all the recording tests that they made. What with memories crowded with concert hall and operatic dates, and sundry other affairs, the events, if such they were regarded in the recording studios, were not all carefully tabulated in their minds.

One wonders if one day we may own the other Caruso and Ruffo recording of the duet from *La Gioconda*, or the Gluck recording of *Ah, non giunge*, or any one of the three versions that Zerola made of the aria from the *Huguenots*. Time alone will tell!

\* \* \*

A long-sought-after record heads the list of historic issues this month. It is the final trio from *Faust*, as sung by Eames, Dalmore and Plancon, coupled with the *Jewel Song* from the same opera in the earlier version by Mme. Eames with piano accompaniment (Historic Record Society No. 1016, 12-inch, price \$2.25, autographed by Mme. Eames).

The celebrated *Jewel Song*, recorded February, 1905, we have always considered one of the very best of Eames' records, exhibiting as it does an ease and beauty of tone not always found in her discs. The extremely rare *Trio*, which remained in the catalog only from June, 1907 to December, 1908, displays little of these qualities on her part (her flatted tone at the end is both a surprise and a shock) or on the part of her companions. However, the coupling is an exceptionally attractive and long overdue collectors' item.

For the second presentation, two interesting items by the versatile tenor, Herman Jadlowker, finally make their appearance. These are Almaviva's opening aria from *The*



*Barber of Seville* (sung in German) and the duet of Tonio and Maria from Donizetti's *Daughter of the Regiment* with Frieda Hempel (HRS No. 1027, 12-inch, price \$2.25). We are not told whether this is the Gramophone edition (catalog No. 052385), which is sung in Italian, or the Odeon edition (No. 76021) which may or may not be in the original language. The solo recording dates from 1908-09, and the duet, if the latter version, from the same time. Which-ever version of the duet it is, we can rest assured that it is well sung, for both artists were in their prime when it was made.

A whole galaxy of superb items is featured on this month's list of the International Record Collectors' Club. The first is a first edition of two songs, Hahn's *Si mes vers avaient des ailes* and Schubert's *Wohin*, sung by Marcella Sembrich (recorded January 30, 1908); it is coupled with her rare *Halka* aria in the original Polish (IRCC No. 129, 12-inch, price \$2.25).

Secondly, there is a most welcome record by Mario Ancona, which was suggested in this column several months ago (IRCC No. 130; 12-inch, price \$2.25). On one face of the disc is the Andrea Chenier *Monologo* (originally Victor 38170) and on the reverse side Valentine's *Death Scene* from *Faust*, which was recorded January 6, 1908, and, although given the catalog number 38109, was never previously released for public sale in this country.

Thirdly, there is a 10 3/4-inch disc from Fonotipia, a real specialty indeed! On it Maria Barrientos does some of the greatest coloratura singing to be found in the whole of recorded literature. So superb is the tone production and so facile the style of this then very young soprano that one can only think of the most extravagant epithets won by Patti at her prime.

Too late for review last month were four worthy IRCC releases which deserve mention here:

*Nina Boboh* (Malay Slumber Song), and *Le Retour des Promis* (Dessauer), sung by Eva Gauthier. (No. 127, 10-inch, price \$1.75).

*Götterdämmerung*, *Zu neuen thaten*, and *Betrug! Schändlichster Betrug!* (the latter a first pressing), sung by Johanna Gadschi. (No. 128, 10-inch, price \$1.75).

*Haidenröslein* (Schubert), and *Freudvoll und leidvoll* (Schumann); and *Du bist die Ruh* (Schubert), and *Intermezzo* (Schumann); both sung by Lilli Lehmann. (Two 10 3/4-inch discs, price \$2.00 each).

## RECORD SALES AND EXCHANGES

Rates: Advertisements for this section are priced at 25 cents a line, with a minimum charge of 50 cents.

### FOR SALE

**Brahms:** Sonata in D mi., Op. 108 — Szigeti and Petri. **Schubert:** Piano Sonata in B fl., Op. Post., Ernst Victor Wolff. Perfect condition. Played with cactus needles only. No smears on surface. 50% off list price. Mark White, 2110 E. Pratt St., Baltimore, Maryland.

**Brahms:** Violin Concerto — Georg Kulenkampff and Berlin Phil. Orch. Perfect condition. Half price \$3.75. Box Y, A. M. L., 12 E. 22nd St., New York.

**Mozart:** Serenade No. 12 in C mi., K. 388 — Fiedler's Woodwind Sinfonietta. Excellent shape, played with cactus only. Half price \$2.75. — L. L. C., c/o American Music Lover.

## Swing Music Notes

### Enzo Archetti

■ SINCE THE FIRST SHIPMENT OF SWING records from France some months back were reviewed in this column (in the March and May 1938 issues) no more have been received for review, but the catalogue has nevertheless been increasing monthly. In France they have been hailed as such successes that some have even won prizes as the best jazz records of the year. The one that has probably caused more comment than any of the releases was Number SW 18 which contains, on one side, a swing interpretation of the first movement of Bach's *Concerto in D minor* (presumably the one for two violins and orchestra) and on the other an improvisation on the same movement. Both sides are played by Eddie South, Negro swing violinist; Stephane Grappelly, violinist of the French Hot Club Quintet, and Django Reinhardt, guitarist of the same Quintet. It has become quite the fashion lately to swing classic songs, ballads, operatic arias, and even Debussy (note last month's record of *My Reverie* by Larry Clinton and his orchestra). But I think this is the first time any such thing has been tried with Bach. It should be worth hearing.



The remainder of the *Swing* list to date contains: *Tea For Two* and *Christmas Swing*, violin solos by Michael Warlop (Sw 13); *I Ain't Got Nobody* and *Baby Won't You Please Come Home* by Bill Coleman and orchestra (Sw 14); *College Stomp* and *Harlem Swing* by Philip Brun and orchestra (Sw 15); *Sweet Sue* and *Hangin' 'round Boudon* by Dicky Wells and orchestra (Sw 16); *When You're Smiling* and *If I Had You* by Alex Combella's Hot Four (Sw 17); *Blues Got Me* and *Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen* piano solo by Garland Wilson (Sw 19); *I'm Coming Virginia* and *Blue Light Blues* by Benny Carter and orchestra (Sw 20); *I've Found a New Baby* and *Alabama Bound* by Grappelly and Reinhardt (Sw 21); *Bill Street Blues* and *After You've Gone* by the Bill Coleman orchestra (Sw 22); *Minor's Swing* and *Viper's Dream* by the French Hot Club Quintet (Sw 23); *Al's Idea* and *Avalon*, sax solos by Alix Combelle (Sw 24); *Peter's Stomp* and *Jam Men* by Pierre Allier and his orchestra (Sw 25); *Easy Going* and *Gabriel's Swing* by the Philip Brun Orchestra (Sw 26); *I Got Rhythm* and *Japanese Sandman* by the Dicky Wells Orchestra (Sw 27); *Serenade for a Wealthy Widow* and *Taj Mahal* by the Michael Warlop Orchestra (Sw 28); and *Swingin' in Paris* and *Fletcher's Stomp* by Fletcher Allen and his orchestra (Sw 29).

All of these records are now available through two well known importers in and near New York. However, last month the English branch of *His Master's Voice* was given the right to repress the records in England. It is not unreasonable to presume that Victor may also soon avail itself of the privilege its sister company acquired.

A completely new edition of *Hot Discography* by Charles Delaunay will appear shortly. It is not a supplement to the previous edition, as was originally planned, but a new book entirely, including all the previous material plus subsequent discoveries and releases. At about the same time Charles Delaunay's new book, *De la Vie et du Jazz*, will also be published. It will be in English and French. Both books will be reviewed in this magazine as soon as they are received.

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A new Commodore *Classic in Swing* is on records are on hand; they are:

*"Life" Spears a Jitterbug* (Alexander King)

*What's the Use?* (Isham Jones - Charles Newman)

Played by Bud Freeman and His Gang (Bud Freeman, tenor sax; Dave Matthews, alto sax; Pee Wee Russell, clarinet; Bobby Hackett, cornet; Jess Stacy, piano; Eddie Condon, guitar; Artie Shapiro, bass; Marty Marsala, drums). Commodore 507, price \$1.

A short introductory skirl on the saxes leads directly into a fine rapid chorus by Jess Stacy backed only by the drums — played on the rim. A remarkable combination, full of interest because of Stacy. This is one of the longest solos he has had on any record for a long time and it reveals again the fine, discreet, sensitive artist he is. No bombast, no exhibitionism. Just good solid playing. Bud Freeman follows with a good but not outstanding chorus immediately followed by Pee Wee whose very first notes on the clarinet raise the temperature of the music. His phrasing has a splendid lift — the kind that makes good swing. Bobby Hackett takes off from Pee Wee's last note and plays a chorus in much the same vein but in his own inimitable way. The record closes with an all-in where everyone does very much as he pleases. Dave Mathews is supposed to play the alto sax on this side but I confess I did not hear him. I could not distinguish the tenor from the alto sax, nor could I recognize any sax style but Bud's.

As a composition *"Life" Spears a Jitterbug* is no masterpiece but it is typical of the tunes used for jamming. The title was quite obviously suggested by *Life* magazine's recent enthusiastic splurge into swing music.

*What's the Use* is more interesting as a composition because of its melody and slower tempo. Here the lead is taken by Bobby Hackett, whose warm tone gives the chorus a certain feeling of intimacy. Bud follows with a short comment in the same manner, which Bobby answers as if it were an intimate dialogue. Only the rhythm backs this first part. But at this point Pee Wee enters with a burning hot tone backed by the full orchestra. The atmosphere changes. Here Eddie Condon's guitar work stands out more than usual. Jess Stacy adds a strong lift to the music. The finale is a free for all not quite in the spirit of what went before.

In both selections the drumming is not too subtle. While not exactly exhibitionistic it is a bit too heavy and prominent for the best interests of the soloists. No trombone is included in this line-up. This gives the orchestra a lighter and more transparent tone but it is not better than that produced on previous records.



# In the Popular Vein

Horace Van Norman

## STANDARD POPULAR

AAA—*At Long Last Love*, and *You Never Know*. Larry Clinton and his Orchestra. Victor 26014.

AAA—*For No Rhyme or Reason*, and *From Alpha to Omega*. Joe Rines and his St. Regis Orchestra. Victor 26022.

■ Cole Porter, a writer of vast if unpredictable talent, had the misfortune a few years ago to write one of the most brilliant musical comedy scores ever to grace a Broadway stage. We are referring, of course, to *Anything Goes*. Since then, everything he has written has been compared (and unfavorably) to the memorable *Anything Goes* tunes, which is a wretched break for Porter but inevitable under the circumstances. The four numbers above, all from his current Winter Garden musical, *You Never Know*, will be put to the same comparison and I fear that they will come out of it even more ingloriously than his other recent efforts.

For there is little distinction to these numbers. *At Long Last Love*, which appears to be the hit of the show, is remindful of at least three other Porter tunes, and while it is certainly not unethical for a man to steal from himself, it is just as certainly not a healthy symptom. *From Alpha to Omega* is an attempt on Porter's part to write another *You're the Top*, but this time there is no sparkle or wit to either the music or lyrics. Incidentally, *At Long Last Love* boasts of a few atrociously bad lines in the lyric that would be a discredit to any hack writer in the land, let alone the resplendent Porter. Clinton's work here is rather soggy and uninspired. He is obviously not enthusiastic about the numbers assigned to him. Rines puts quite a bit of bounce into his pair of recordings, which is O. K., since both tunes are rather old-fashioned anyway, *For No Rhyme or Reason* in particular being a typical one-step of the type prevalent a decade or two ago.

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AAA—*My Heart is Unemployed*, and *How Long Can Love Keep Laughing?* Eddie

Duchin and his Orchestra. Brunswick 8219.

■ These two are from the new Harold Rome revue, *Sing Out the News*, and further familiarity with the work of this highly touted young gentleman only sustains the impression gained from his last season's *Pins and Needles* that he is not quite the *Wunderkind* of American popular music that his hardworking press agents have been trying to make us believe. Thoroughly commonplace ideas are not made any less commonplace by attacking them from a position a little left of center, and routine Tin Pan Alley stuff remains just that, even if it boasts a social viewpoint. Duchin handles this pair lightly and politely, with quite a bit of the old reliable Joe Corn piano work which is still Duchin's principal stock in trade, despite *Ol' Man Mose*, high-powered swing arrangements and such.

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AAA—*Lambeth Walk*, and *Je Ne Sais Pa Pa*. Joe Rines and his St. Regis Orchestra. Victor 26015.

■ Well, it seems there were a couple of cockneys in London, and the first thing you knew, there was the *Lambeth Walk* practically sweeping the country. A completely inane dance and the completely inane tune which it inspired are worthy of mention here chiefly as a social phenomenon. And if we are to have recordings of it, let them be recordings which, like this one, retain its essential character, which is that of a happy-go-lucky little London tune which pretends to be nothing but what it actually is and meaning no harm to anyone. Rines, who must bear at least partial responsibility for introducing the darned thing into this country, makes a gay thing of it, even though his attempts at a cockney accent in the vocals may get you down.

• • •

AAA—*Bugle Call Rag*, and *Turkey In the Straw*. Andre Kostelanetz and his Orchestra. Brunswick 8214.

■ Fantastically skillful and elaborately wrought arrangements are these, in the very best Kostelanetz manner. There is nothing in the world quite like the virtuosity of this amazing orchestra and its equally amazing conductor. Here is at least the pattern for the American popular music of the future. That is, when someone comes along who has something vitally important to say musically, what brilliantly competent vehicles he will



have at his disposal in such organizations as this. These are exceptionally full-bodied recordings, much more so than those in the album released last year, and tend to substantiate the rumor that these are auditorium, not studio, recordings.

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AA—*A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody*, and *The Dance of the Blue Danube*.... Horace Heidt and his Alemite Brigadiers. Brunswick 8203.

■ Horace Heidt and his well-known treatment are here applied to a couple of "oldies", which is where they belong. Fred Fisher's *Dance of the Blue Danube* always was a delightful novelty number and Heidt's version of it takes you right back to the early Speakeasy era.

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### HOT JAZZ

AAAA—*Now It Can Be Told*, and *A-Tisket, A-Tasket*. Teddy Wilson and his Orchestra. Brunswick 8199.

■ The uncannily delicate and skillful piano work of Teddy Wilson has seldom been heard to as good advantage as here. His playing always makes me think of a Mozart concerto, although many pianists who play Mozart in our concert halls bring considerably less of refinement and musicianship to their work than does Wilson to his. These are particularly successful recordings, owing in no small measure to the vocals of that excellent artist, Nan Wynn, whose somewhat other-wordly singing seems to be curiously in key with the mood of Wilson's work.

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AAAA—*Muskrat Ramble*, and *Ring Dem Bells*. Lionel Hampton and his Orchestra. Victor 26017.

■ Magnificent swingeroos by the grand group that Hampton has surrounded himself with for these and other recent recording dates. It seems that if Hampton could retain this particular combo intact for an indefinite period, he might be one of the most successful swing artists on records. *Ring Dem Bells*, Ellington's old standby, sounds like a million in Hampton's rejuvenated version.

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AAA—*The Blue Bells of Scotland*, and *My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean*. Ella Logan. Brunswick 8196.

■ Aided and abetted by an excellent Perry Botkin band, the lusty Logan here swings the living lights out of these time hallowed

Scotch ballads and to strikingly good effect. Maybe, in swinging a Scotch tune, it helps a little if you're Scotch. Anyhow, that wee bit of dynamite, La Logan, tears them apart and puts them back together again — and makes you like it.

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AA—*My Heart at Thy Sweet Voice*, and *A Pretty Girl Milking Her Cow*. Larry Clinton and his Orchestra. Victor 26024.

■ It seems to me that the nadir of swinging the classics is reached here. The *Samson* excerpt is done in fiendishly bad taste, without humor if humor was intended, in fact without effect of any kind. Equally ineffective is the arrangement, on the reverse, of one of the loveliest folk-songs in the world.

### OTHER CURRENT RECORDINGS OF MERIT

AAA—*Wacky Dust*, and *Spinnin' the Webb*. Chick Webb and his Orchestra. Decca 2021.

AAA—*Texas Shuffle*, and *Mama Don't Want Peas An' Rice*. Count Basie and his Orchestra. Decca 2030.

AAA—*Simple and Sweet*, and *Heart and Soul*. Connie Boswell. Decca 2028.

AAA—*Mister Paganini*, and *Shout, Shout, Shout*. Cab Calloway and his Orchestra. Vocalion 4369.

AAA—*Ya Got Me*, and *There's No Place Like Your Arms*. Jan Savitt and his Top Hatters. Bluebird B-7797.

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AAA—*Rhumbas*; played by famous Cuban Bands. Victor set S-11, six 10-inch discs, price \$5.00.

AAA—*Melodias Gitano-Hungaras*; played by famous Hungarian Gypsy Orchestras. Victor set S-13, six discs, price \$5.00.

■ The rhumbas are all authentic recordings and are representative of the best bands to be heard in Cuba. Much of the music sounds alike, but the pieces are distinguished by their vigorous treatment and the absence of the sentimental and silken-gloved playing that is commonly heard from American orchestras, like Cugat's and others.

The Hungarian Gypsy music has proved very popular with people who like this kind of entertainment since it was released about a month ago; and from all reports from the dealers it is proving a popular album. The music is well played, and all of the recordings seem to be modern ones. You might mark these albums for gifts to friends who like exotic music.



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#### Tuesdays—

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#### Wednesdays—

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8:30 P.M.—Tommy Dorsey Orchestra

#### Thursdays—

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7:30 P.M.—Mario Cozzi, baritone

#### Fridays—

8:00 P.M.—Cities Service Concert  
9:00 P.M.—Waltz Time

#### Saturdays—

10:30 A.M.—Music Internationale  
10:30 P.M.—Toscanini and NBC Symphony  
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### Blue Network

#### Sundays—

12:30 P.M.—Radio City Music Hall  
2:00 P.M.—RCA Magic Key  
6:00 P.M.—Summer Concert Orchestra  
6:00 P.M.—Friends of Music (Beg. Oct. 23rd)

#### Mondays—

3:00 P.M.—U. S. Navy Band  
7:45 P.M.—Vivian della Chiesa, soprano  
9:00 P.M.—NBC-String Sym. — Frank Black  
11:05 P.M.—San Francisco Opera (Oct. 10-17)

#### Tuesdays—

3:00 P.M.—Piano Recital  
3:15 P.M.—U. S. Army Band

#### Wednesdays—

2:00 P.M.—Vivian della Chiesa, soprano  
6:30 P.M.—Alma Kitchell, contralto  
8:30 P.M.—Silhouettes in Blue  
10:30 P.M.—NBC-Minstrel Show

#### Thursdays—

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9:00 P.M.—Toronto Promenade Sym.

#### Fridays—

7:15 P.M.—Oscar Shumsky, violinist  
9:00 P.M.—Paul Martin and His Music  
11:05 P.M.—San Francisco Opera (Oct. 28)

#### Saturdays—

9:00 P.M.—National Barn Dance  
10:30 P.M.—Toscanini and NBC Symphony  
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12:30 P.M.—Salt Lake City Tabernacle  
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9:00 P.M.—Ford Sunday Evening Hour

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3:00 P.M.—Curtis Institute of Music  
10:30 P.M.—Story of the Song

#### Tuesdays—

5:00 P.M.—Music for Fun  
9:30 P.M.—Camel Hour — Benny Goodman

#### Wednesdays—

8:30 P.M.—Paul Whiteman

#### Thursdays—

3:00 P.M.—U. S. Army Band

#### Saturdays—

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